

Special Issue

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# 42

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**PIES**  
7 SUMMER  
FAVORITES

# 158

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Extra-Crispy Fried Chicken  
See page 74 for a recipe.





Sphaera, Stephan Balkenhol

# Austria. Moments of Bliss

A singular journey, a lifetime of memories.



Mozart. Klimt. Beethoven. Moser. Haydn. Austria long set the pace for music, art, and design—and a century later, that explosion is happening again. Throughout the country, old legends mingle seamlessly with new creativity. High-calibre festivals reflect this surge, as does the incredible wine scene, and a sophisticated culinary movement: farmers, chefs and winemakers deepening their historic connections to all things seasonal and local. That innovation that became synonymous with Austria? It's stronger than ever.



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## 1\_Sans Souci - Sleep, Eat and Drink in Style

The newly opened Hotel Sans Souci stands for luxury meets contemporary in the truest sense of the word. The building was originally built in 1873 and transformed today into a luxury boutique hotel with rooms inspired by Philippe Starck: design furniture paired with antiques and eclectic pieces of art. Located in the center of Vienna's cultural happenings, it is surrounded by the MuseumsQuartier Wien, the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna (Museum of Fine Arts), the Museum of Natural History and the Volkstheater, and just around the corner of the high street fashion shops of the Mariahilfer Strasse, as well as fancy small design boutiques of the artist's quarter Spittelberg. Its La Veranda Restaurant continues with the theme of imperial luxury paired with extravagant modern art; the large communal table at the heart of the room creates an elegant atmosphere. Likewise elegant yet unpretentious are the creations of Chef de Cuisine. With his team, he strives to present authentic culinary dining experiences, relying mostly on organic ingredients sourced from the region. In the afternoon, the hotel celebrates traditional tea time with sweet and salty delicacies and the best teas served from a special tea wagon. **www.sanssouci-wien.com**







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## 2\_A Winery on the Danube

"Grüner Veltliner is the last of the great European white wine grapes." So observed Terry Theise, the esteemed US wine connoisseur. The popular wine is a highlight of its native Niederösterreich (the region around Vienna), and nowhere more so than at Nikolaihof. Tucked away near Krems, this former 12th-century monastery is Europe's first biodynamic wine estate. The organic winery would be famous simply for its Robert Parker-endorsed Grüner, were it not for the equally sensational kitchen, the beloved annual apricot harvest (fluffy apricot dumplings!) and one of the more enchanting dining spots on the continent. On a warm summer night, indulge in the finest Grüners and a spectacular meal underneath a massive, century-old Kaiser lime tree. You won't soon forget it. [www.nikolaihof.at](http://www.nikolaihof.at)



## 3\_Gourmet Village Purbach

Barely an hour south of Vienna lies a lovely secret: an ancient and beautiful village still untouched by tourism, yet brimming with the stuff of a wonderful sojourn. Purbach has a population of under 3,000, but it's home to a dazzling culinary scene—including one of Europe's top restaurants, Gut Purbach. Star chef Max Stiegl takes advantage of all this romantic region has to offer, from local agriculture to an array of award-winning vineyards. Old villages sometimes get trapped in the past, but ventures like Stiegl's demonstrate the innovation and vitality deep in Purbach's DNA. Meanwhile you can build up an appetite with a dip in the lake, a bike ride around it or a tour of the fifty historic wine cellars in nearby Kellergasse. [www.gutpurbach.at](http://www.gutpurbach.at).



## 4\_A Gourmet's Roadmap

You don't know a place till you've tasted its regional specialties. With this in mind, Via Culinaria was born—a gourmet guide with seven culinary paths throughout Salzburg City and SalzburgLand. From fish to cheese to sweets, from gourmet restaurants to alpine huts and organic farms, a perfect mix for travelers with ambitious gourmet tastes. The order of your route, the season and the hours are all up to you. [www.via-culinaria.com](http://www.via-culinaria.com)



## 5\_Europa Stüberl

The reputation of Europa Stüberl, the Grand Hotel Europa's in-house restaurant, reaches well beyond Innsbruck. The award-winning cuisine blends culinary innovation with classic Tyrolean seasonal dishes. Choose your table in five different "Stuben" (parlours) radiating Tyrolean charm, like the Alte Stube with centuries-old farmhouse-style wooden panelling, or the Max Weiler Stube, named for the Tyrolean painter. [www.grandhoteleuropa.at](http://www.grandhoteleuropa.at).





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# An Evening of EXCELLENCE



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## TASTE

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## PAIR

There may be no match more sophisticated or pleasurable than chocolate and wine. Whether it's a ripe, soft Merlot or a rounded, rich port, a satisfying treat such as **Lindt EXCELLENCE 70% Cocoa** brings out nuances in both wine styles with flavors ranging from bright berries and plums to savory essences of nuts, spices and oak.



## INDULGE

If one is not enough, heighten the experience with layers of Lindt, using it to complement your favorite traditional chocolate desserts. The Master Chocolatiers at Lindt recommend layering a classic mousse with **Lindt EXCELLENCE 70% Cocoa** or putting a spin on Pot de Crème with **Lindt EXCELLENCE Intense Orange**.




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Scan for additional pairing suggestions, complete recipes and more on The Five Senses of Chocolate Tasting process.  
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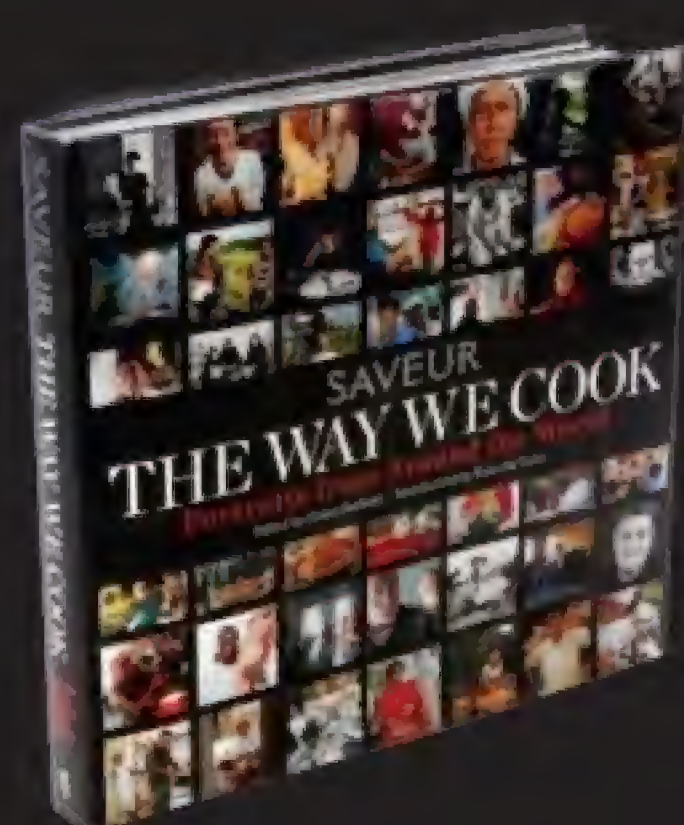


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# SAVEUR

*Special Issue*

# BOUNTIFUL PRAIRIE



The vast expanse in the middle of America is called the heartland for a reason. Here, on the prairie, in the cities, and on swaths of rich farmland, edible treasures abound. In **Kansas**, cowboys drive cattle, the potluck is alive and well, and fried chicken is practically a religion. **Oklahoma** yields the juiciest watermelons, most competitive pie-baking, and pioneering restaurants. And in Omaha, **Nebraska**, business means beef and the steakhouses are legendary. The land has been shaped by many hands—native tribes planted corn and raised cattle, and European settlers sowed the seeds of the country's breadbasket. Today chefs, farmers, and home cooks continue to build a culinary legacy. Join us in celebrating the region's delicious heritage.

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Cover *Extra-Crispy Fried Chicken* PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL KRAUS

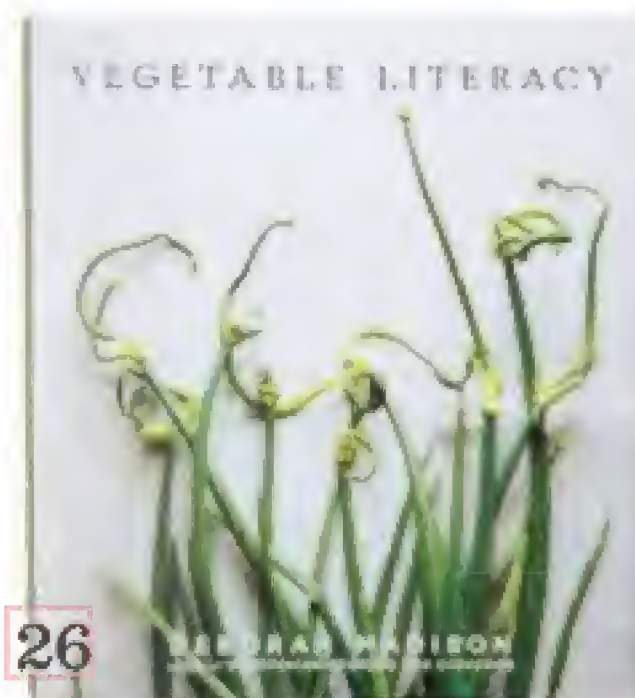
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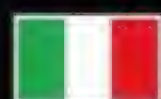
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# FIRST



## Heart's Content

In America's heartland, happiness is a wheat field and a potluck supper

**J**UST A FEW HOURS BEFORE we put this issue of *SAVEUR* to bed, a text message bleeped in on my iPhone. It was from my friend, photographer James Roper, who was writing from eastern Kansas, where he lives. Below a snapshot of a field of dry, ripe wheat were these words: "Wish you could hear this. Sounds like gentle rain or a slow simmer." For me, James' message was a sudden and happy reminder of why we put together this issue in the first place, with its collection of features (starting on [page 46](#)) about the region he is from, the Great Plains states of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Nebraska.

My connection to that part of America is personal; from ages 10 to 12, I lived in rural Oklahoma with my family, taken there by my father's work as an office products salesman. A California kid whose notions of the prairie largely came from *The Wizard of Oz*, I arrived and quickly fell in love. I loved how friendly our country neighbors were. And I loved their down-home foods—the fried chicken, the hush puppies. I loved, as well, the landscape. Near our house was a wheat field I'd wander to, which grew to towering heights. The idea that the sandwich bread in my lunch

bag could have somehow come from this field was amazing to me, a revelation.

When you fly over it, the flat, open Midwest can seem a monotony. But if you alight there, you realize that the physicality of the prairie, with its big skies and its endless moments of small wonder, holds majesty. You feel it on the ranches that supply the beef to Omaha's classic steakhouses ([page 96](#)), at an Oklahoma melon harvest ([page 88](#)), and at a cookout at the end of Kansas' hunting season ([page 70](#)). You can taste it in the pies at a baking contest near Tulsa ([page 84](#)).

It's my hope that, with the stories here, you'll have an epiphany as I did as a kid, when prairie living changed the way I experienced America. I was struck by the allure of this place at a party—a potluck—I went to last year at the former home of William Burroughs, a literary hero of mine, who spent his last decade in Lawrence, Kansas. In the warmth of the friends I made there (including James, who took many of this issue's photos) and the wonderful dishes I ate, I felt again the region's magic. Forks scraped plates, folks conversed, and those sounds were as much the music of the Plains as the rustle of the wheat James described in his text message to me. I've no doubt that with this issue you'll hear it too.

—JAMES OSELAND, *Editor-in-Chief*



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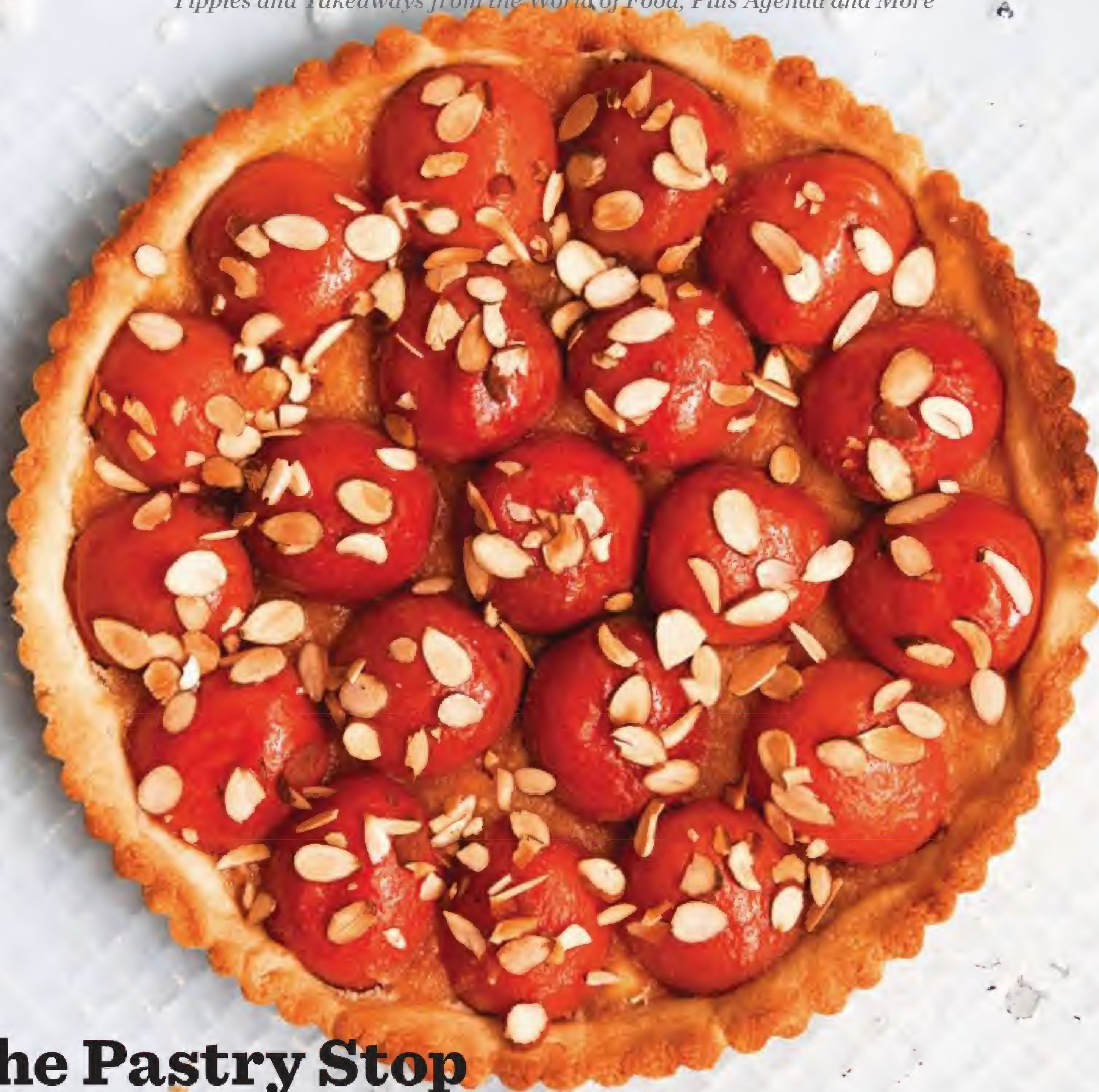
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# FARE

*Tipplés and Takeaways from the World of Food, Plus Agenda and More*



## The Pastry Stop

A farm stand in the south of France is ripe with sweet summertime memories

**I**T WAS ON THE WAY from the beach that I had the epiphany that led me to culinary school. I was 19 and summering with friends in La Croix-Valmer on France's southern coast. The farm stand tucked amid roadside vineyards was a riot of peak-season color: crimson tomatoes, emerald melons, plums in purples and yellows. I was set on fresh apricots—until I saw the apricot tart. A thin, bronzed crust encircling fat, orange half-orbs scattered with toasted almonds, it looked scrumptious.

It turned out that the stand's owner, a farmer named Nadine

Buschiazzo, had a mother who really could bake. Every summer morning, using Nadine's harvest, Antoinette baked 20 or so tarts, sold still nestled in their fluted pans. I paid for mine, then worried about the tin. "Après fini," Buschiazzo shrugged. "Return it when you're finished." That could have been within the hour, for we devoured the tart right away: A crumbly, tender crust holding sugary-tart fruit set atop

Glazed apricot and almond tart (see [page 18](#) for recipe).



a rich, nutty base, it was better, even, than the sea, sand, and sun.

That was 21 years ago. Now an avid baker, I've learned how to re-create it at home—mixing potato flour into the dough for a toothsome crust; covering the bottom with almond meal that soaks up the baking apricots' caramelly juices, transforming into a delectable paste. Still, I often return to La Croix-Valmer, and I always stop for one of Antoinette's tarts, to revisit the summer treat that ignited my passion. —Victoria Ross

### Apricot-Almond Tart

SERVES 8-10

A combination of all-purpose and potato flours gives this simple summer tart (pictured on page 17) a delicate, crumbly crust. Plums, peaches, or berries can be substituted for apricots.

- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- ¼ cup potato flour (see page 108)
- ½ cup sugar
- 9 tbsp. butter, plus more for greasing
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ⅛ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ¾ cup almond meal (see page 108)
- 10 apricots, halved and pitted
- ½ cup apricot preserves
- 3 tbsp. sliced almonds, lightly toasted, for garnish

**1** Pulse flours, sugar, butter, baking powder, and salt in a food processor until pea-size crumbles form. Add egg and 2-3 tbsp. ice-cold water; pulse until dough comes together. Form dough into a flat disk; wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate 1 hour.

**2** On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 10" circle; press into a greased 11" tart pan with a removable bottom set over a baking sheet. Chill for 1 hour.

**3** Heat oven to 425°. Spread almond meal evenly over dough; arrange apricots over top. Bake until the crust is golden brown and fruit is tender, 25-30 minutes. Transfer tart to a wire rack; let cool.

**4** Heat preserves in a 1-qt. saucepan until warmed; pour through a fine-mesh strainer into a bowl. Brush top of tart generously with strained preserves; sprinkle with almonds. Let cool completely before serving.



Yvonne Kuo enjoys chop suey at her father's restaurant, Wha Kong 2, in Rotterdam.

**DOUBLE DUTCH** If you visit the Netherlands, eat plenty of Dutch pancakes and pickled herring, sure, but don't miss our most beloved, if unexpected, cuisine: Indo-Chinese food. Chinese immigrants, who had arrived as workers for Dutch shipping companies, were already running restaurants here when Indonesia secured its independence from Dutch rule in the 1940s. These restaurateurs tweaked menus to appeal to returning Dutch expats' taste for Indonesian food. Today, in cities like Rotterdam, restaurants like my in-laws' Wha Kong 2 serve fusion Indonesian roasted pork topped with Chinese sweet and sour sauce, as well as simple dishes such as *tjap tjoy* (chop suey). Others, like Tak-Lee, offer a *rijsttafel*, or *smörgasbord*, of bites from both cuisines—*sate ayam* (chicken skewers), *daging smoor* (brisket stewed in soy sauce), *taugé sambal* (bean sprouts in chile paste)—that have become Dutch classics in their own right. —Suzanne Ma



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## AGENDA

August/September 2013

August

**8-11**

### FISKIDAGURINN (GREAT FISH DAY)

*Dalvík, Iceland*

At this seafood celebration held in a fishing village in the shadow of the northern Icelandic mountains, visitors gorge on sweet raw shrimp, herring on dark rye bread, grilled cod, and other local delicacies. The best part is everything's free. Those who arrive the night before can partake in the intimate tradition of walking door to door through town sampling homemade *fiskesuppe*, a thick, aromatic fish stew.

Info: fiskidagur.muna.is

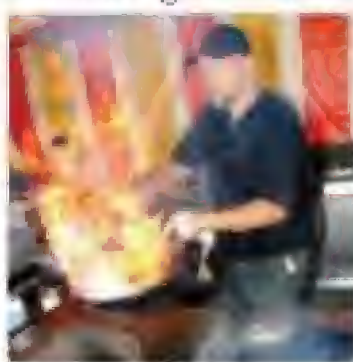
August

**23-25**

### CHEHALIS GARLIC FEST AND CRAFT SHOW

*Chehalis, Washington*

Each year vendors bring tons of the state's 60 garlic varieties to the fairgrounds of this eastern Washington town, where the stinking rose is sold in plant form and cooked into dishes such as garlic sausage, deep-fried



cloves, garlic-butter french fries, and even garlic frozen yogurt. Visitors can quench

their thirst with locally brewed garlic beer or wine from area vintners. BYO breath mints. Info: chehalisgarlicfest.com

August

**25**

Anniversary

### FIRST FOOD CAN PATENTED 1810, London

On this day, King George III awarded inventor Peter Durand a patent to fashion "vessels of glass, pottery, tin, or other metals" for use in preserving food for British troops. Durand experimented with rustproof iron-plated tin, and two years later, the first commercial tin-plate canning factory was established in London. Countless soldiers thereafter were saved from starvation and scurvy with carrots, parsnips, and vegetable soup packaged in airtight portable cans.

September

**6-15**

MISTURA

*Lima, Peru*

This ten-day festival attracts upward of 600,000 partiers to Lima's Costa Verde. Along with dishes by world-renowned chefs—El Bulli's Ferran Adrià has presented in the past—street (continued on page 26)



The Conversation

## BERRY GOOD

In 2006, Jon Sederquist left his investment management job in Boston and, with his wife Patti and newborn son, returned to live on his family's Christmas tree farm in rural Litchfield County, Connecticut. There he created Deeply Rooted Farms, nurturing a lifelong passion for strawberries first ignited when he was a teenager working part-time at a neighbor's berry farm. Sederquist's plot of land, bordered by Revolutionary War-era stone walls, is one of few in New England that, thanks to diverse varieties and well-planned crop rotations, offer strawberries from the end of May all the way through the first frost of autumn. —Jocelyn Ruggiero

### What's the biggest difference between your strawberries and the fist-size ones I get at my supermarket?

Where do I start? Just about everything. Unlike supermarket berries, ours are grown for taste, not durability for shipping. They're also grown in real soil, not soil that's been fumigated and industrialized. This results in a great taste and sweetness. We grow super-firm Jewel strawberries; acidic Cavendish, which thrive in colder climates; Valley Sunset from Canada, which ripen in the summer; conical-shaped Albion; and plump, mildly sweet Allstars. Earliglow, an heirloom variety, is considered our best. It has a quintessentially strawberry flavor: super sweet and aromatic. It's lost popularity over the years because it's too small and fragile, but boy, is it good.

### That's a lot of varieties. Can you tell them apart in a blind taste test or do they all taste like, well, strawberry?

The main strawberry traits I've come up with are texture, sweetness, and acidity. Then there's aroma. Each berry has a different "nose." L'Amour has a pleasant floral aroma that goes exceptionally

well with chocolate. Jewels, while not typically as sweet as others, are like a full-bodied red wine combined with a rich, intense strawberry smell.

### What are the best to use in pies?

I'm not a huge fan of baking strawberries if you don't have to. For me, it ruins that just-picked berry taste. I think they should be served fresh. When I "bake," I do what I call a fresh strawberry pie: cooked sauce and crust, with fresh strawberries sliced on top and served chilled. If you do plan on baking, though, acidic varieties, like Cavendish, which have a sour taste, are best. Adding sugar and cornstarch masks the sourness and results in a pie that's not too sweet.

### So should I steer clear of making strawberry jam too?

Jams seem to preserve the freshness of the fruit better than baking the berry does. It really depends on how you do it, but our friends make a jam that's basically flash-cooked—not more than a few minutes or so on the stovetop. A lot of the freshness from the field stays in the berries. We've found that blending sweet Earliglows with firm Jewels makes a superior jam.



## Bottle Art

In the 1950s, the federal government imposed new taxes on distilleries, levying all aging liquor—whether bottled for sale or still sitting in barrels—as soon as it turned eight years old. In order to avoid paying millions of dollars, Louisville, Kentucky's Jim Beam Company devised a way to sell off stocks of whiskey: They'd package their bourbon in unique hand-painted ceramic decanters that would look great on the era's fashionable home wet bars. From 1955 to 1992, Jim Beam made hundreds of thousands of trophy bottles annually. Some, like the Great Chicago Fire centennial decanter from 1971 (above, bottom) or the football-playing elephant fashioned for the 1972 Republican Convention's original San Diego location (top), commemorated noteworthy events, people, or places. Others, such as the 1974 Bohemian Girl (middle) made for the Bohemian Cafe, a Czech restaurant in Omaha, Nebraska, were custom-ordered. Today, given production costs, few are issued. But vintage decanters are sold (albeit empty) through collectors' club websites, charming relics of mid-20th-century cocktail culture. —Betsy Andrews

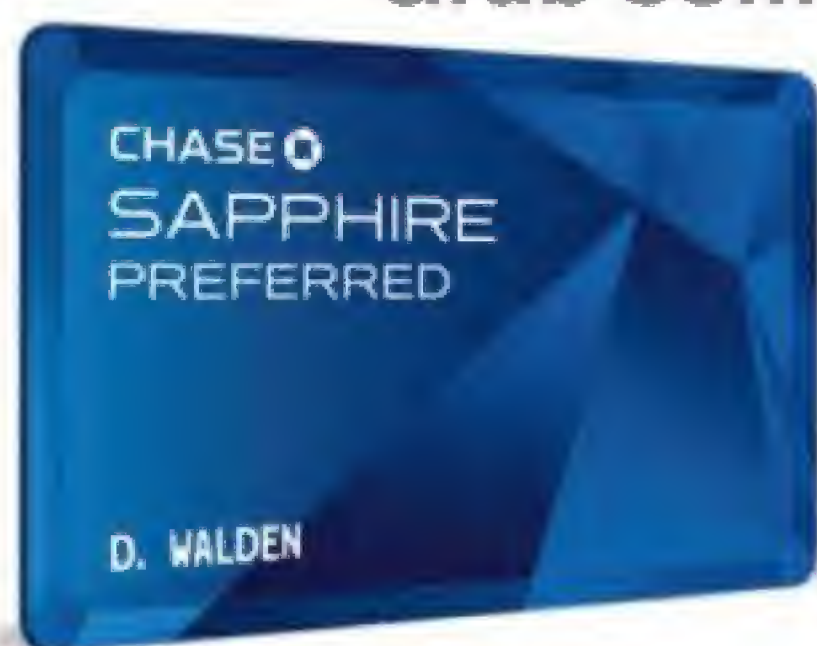
FROM LEFT: GARY CICHOWSKI, DEVAULT PUBLISHING INC.; JAMES OSELAND; ARIANA LINDQUIST (3)





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## 2X POINTS ON TRAVEL AND DINING AT RESTAURANTS

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I Love My Kitchen Because

# Modern English

Tired of her cluttered kitchen, London cookbook author and chef Anissa Helou went minimalist

I started dreaming of this kitchen years ago, after a visit to a friend's flat in Paris. She lived in a converted artist's studio where she had the kitchen at one end, the dining table in the middle, and the seating area way at the other end. It was amazing to cook in such an airy space. My kitchen back home in London was dark in comparison and cluttered with spongeware pottery and other collectibles. It was also separated from the dining room by a narrow corridor.

A few years later I took the leap and bought a penthouse duplex loft with an upstairs room that was perfect for the kitchen I wanted to

create—flooded with light and large enough to accommodate a dining area as well as my study. Since I spend so much time in my kitchen, my primary concern was that it, well, not look like a kitchen. I wanted a space where I could relax and write too. But since I teach cooking classes, functionality was as important as aesthetics.

Initially I didn't want any stainless steel; everyone seemed to have it, and I was sick of looking at it. That is, until I went to a catering trade show where I stopped dead in my tracks in front of a sleek, elegant, and super-functional stainless-steel island designed by Elro, a Swiss firm that supplies kitchens to cruise liners.

The edges were curved and the surface was so smooth you could hardly see the built-in induction burners from a few feet away.

I basically asked the architects to design the kitchen around the island, making sure everything I needed to cook and teach had a designated and easily reachable storage space. I also asked for the dishwasher and fridge to be integrated so they are largely invisible.

Eleven years later, I still love cooking and teaching in my kitchen just as much as I love looking at it. —Anissa Helou's last article for *SAVEUR* was "The Land of Bread and Spice" (March, 2012).

To store my surplus of cookbooks, I had extra shelves built up high, with a library ladder for access.

I used different shades of paint for the floor to delineate the kitchen (dark blue), dining area (light blue), and the study, which I left unpainted.

The Swiss company Elro builds its islands to meet customer needs; I needed the counter to be higher since I'm quite tall.









## Gold Standard

The city of Cologne, Germany, is home to what may be the world's most refreshing ale

**L**IKE MANY TOURISTS, on my initial visit to Cologne in the summer of 1998, I made my first stop at the Cologne Cathedral, the Gothic-style masterpiece that towers over the city. My second stop was right next door: Früh am Dom, a cavernous beer hall that pours the town's signature style of ale, kölsch.

I remember how the server arrived at my table and, in the highly ritualized fashion that is customary in Cologne, pulled a small, narrow glass called a *stange* filled with pale, foamy brew from his circular, handled tray and placed it atop a coaster, which he marked with a tick of his pencil. I sipped: Crisp, mild, subtly fruity, that refreshing kölsch took the edge right off the hot July day.

As soon as I finished, my *stange*

was wordlessly replaced with a fresh one, and another pencil tick was added to the coaster. Since the typical *stange*, a slender cylinder whose name means "rod" in German, holds a mere 200 milliliters, about 6.75 ounces, of beer, I could drink quite a few, so this ceremony went on for some time. Finally, taking a cue from the locals surrounding me, I put a stop to the proceedings by placing the coaster on top of my glass. The server then added up the pencil marks, multiplied them by the price of a *stange*, and scrawled the total on the coaster, transforming it into a beer-stained tab.

As I found out, the trappings surrounding kölsch reflect its esteem here as well as its uniqueness, for kölsch, an ale that goes down like a summer lager, is a beer unlike all others. Most of Germany is known for its golden lagers—pilsner, helles,

märzen, and the like—which are fermented slowly at lower temperatures using cold-loving lager yeasts. Lagers, particularly suited to chilly northern climes like Germany's where they can be aged in caverns and frigid cellars, rose to prominence in the 16th century, joining the ales that preceded them. But lagers back then weren't so light. Germany's blonde lagers date to the mid-1800s, when advances in kilning technology made the production of pale malts possible.

Combining lager yeasts and the newer, lighter malts, brewers created a crisp, golden beer style that became the talk of Europe—except in Cologne, a city whose conservative traditionalism has long been one of its trademarks. There, brewers stood resolute in defense of old-style ales—heavier, darker, more dimensional beers that fermented more quickly at warmer temperatures.

But progress was not on traditional German ale's side. By the late 19th century, given lager's popularity, Cologne brewers figured it was time to meet the competition head on. So they kept their ale yeasts but adopted the paler malts that had become so fashionable in lagers, as well as lager's longer, cooler conditioning. What resulted was a beer as thirst-quenching as a lager, with a milder flavor than other ales but nearly as much complexity. In Cologne, the style proved a hit, and breweries, from the brightly lit, rambling Brauhaus Sion—one of the city's oldest, founded in 1318—to the homey, fourth-generation Brauerei Pfaffen and others, now serve none but kölsch.

It's great stuff. Technically an ale that's made like a lager, Cologne's native beer finesses the divide between the two, borrowing from each to become something more balanced and delicate altogether. Most kölsches have a light fruitiness up front—

## Tasting Notes: Kölsch

**Früh Kölsch** (\$4 for a pint) Floral, faintly lemony, and with just a hint of sulfur, this beer is slightly difficult to find in the U.S. but is a terrific example of the style's subtle complexities.

**Four Peaks Sunbru Kölsch-Style Ale** (\$8 for a six-pack) With a wine-like aroma, a mild maltiness, and a light briskness, this canned version from an Arizona brewery goes down great on a hot summer day with a platter of spicy Mexican food.

**Gaffel Kölsch** (\$4 for an 11-ounce bottle) Widely available but still very much the real deal, this is arguably the driest and hoppiest beer of its kind, with a pleasingly bitter finish. Try it with bratwurst or grilled kielbasa.

**New Holland Full Circle** (\$10 for a six-pack) A slightly wheaty beer, particularly in the aroma, this light-bodied brew from Michigan offers a fruity roundness in the front and a drier, more quenching finish.

**Reissdorf Kölsch** (\$4 for a 500 ml bottle) A good introduction to the style, this decidedly lager-ish kölsch is fairly dry and barely fruity—there's a hint of pear—with a touch of astringent sulfur.

**Sünner Kölsch** (\$4 for a 500 ml bottle) Said to have been the first ale produced in the kölsch style, back in 1906, this is a malty beer with a creamy body, light sweetness, and slight hoppiness at the end.

**Saint Arnold Fancy Lawnmower Beer** (\$8 for a six-pack) For years a mainstay of its Houston brewery, this kölsch-style beer is more citrusy than most Cologne originals but not so much that it sacrifices any of its thirst-quenching appeal.



Beer is carried to tables at the popular Cologne beer hall Paffgen.





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(continued from page 20) vendors serve regional dishes like *pachamanca*, a potato, herb, and meat stew made in a pit covered with red-hot stones. At the festival market, farmers sell 25 kinds of quinoa and 1,000 varieties of Peru's most prized crop, potatoes, including the black-skinned Papa Negra, prized for its sweet flesh. Info: [mistura.pe](http://mistura.pe)

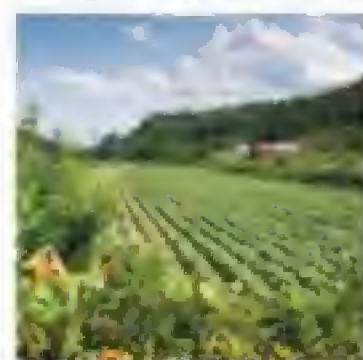
September

**21-22**

### APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT FARM TOURS

Western North Carolina

As the farmlands of western North Carolina transition from tobacco crops, the area has seen an explosion



of organic farms, orchards, micro-breweries, and craft distilleries. For two days this fall, visitors can check in on the

artisanal awakening. At Asheville Fresh Herbs, where growers raise Thai basil; East Fork Farm, which offers sustainable lamb, rabbit, and poultry; and two dozen other producers, the public can purchase fruits and veggies, meats, and cheeses directly from the source. Info: [asapconnections.org](http://asapconnections.org)

September

**24**

Birthday

### FRANK CLARENCE MARS

1882, Hancock, Minnesota

During his childhood struggle with polio, Frank C. Mars' mother, Alva, taught him to hand-dip chocolates and craft confections. Mars eventually turned his sickbed diversion into a livelihood, making his first commercial treat, a buttercream candy, in 1911 in his own kitchen. In 1920 he founded Mars, Inc., whose runaway hit, the Milky Way, was followed by M&M's and Snickers. Today the company Mars built nets \$33 billion annually, selling everything from chocolate to gum and coffee.



September

**26**

### STORMING OF THE SAZERAC

New Orleans

In 1949, New Orleans' Roosevelt Hotel purchased the Sazerac House and its namesake cocktail recipe: rye whiskey and Peychaud's bitters muddled with a sugar cube in an absinthe-rinsed glass. The bar had been men-only. But new proprietor Seymour Weiss changed that rule, and female patrons "stormed" the place. Each year women dressed in '40s garb commemorate the event with a ladies-only brunch while raising a Sazerac to gender equality. Info: [therooseveltneworleans.com](http://therooseveltneworleans.com)

soft peach or apricot or a hint of something lemony but nowhere near the big berry or citrus flavors you might find in other ales. The hoppiness, too, is nuanced, rarely approaching the bitterness of even a mild pale ale, while the body of a kölsch is crisp on the palate but without the dry austerity of a lager like pilsner.

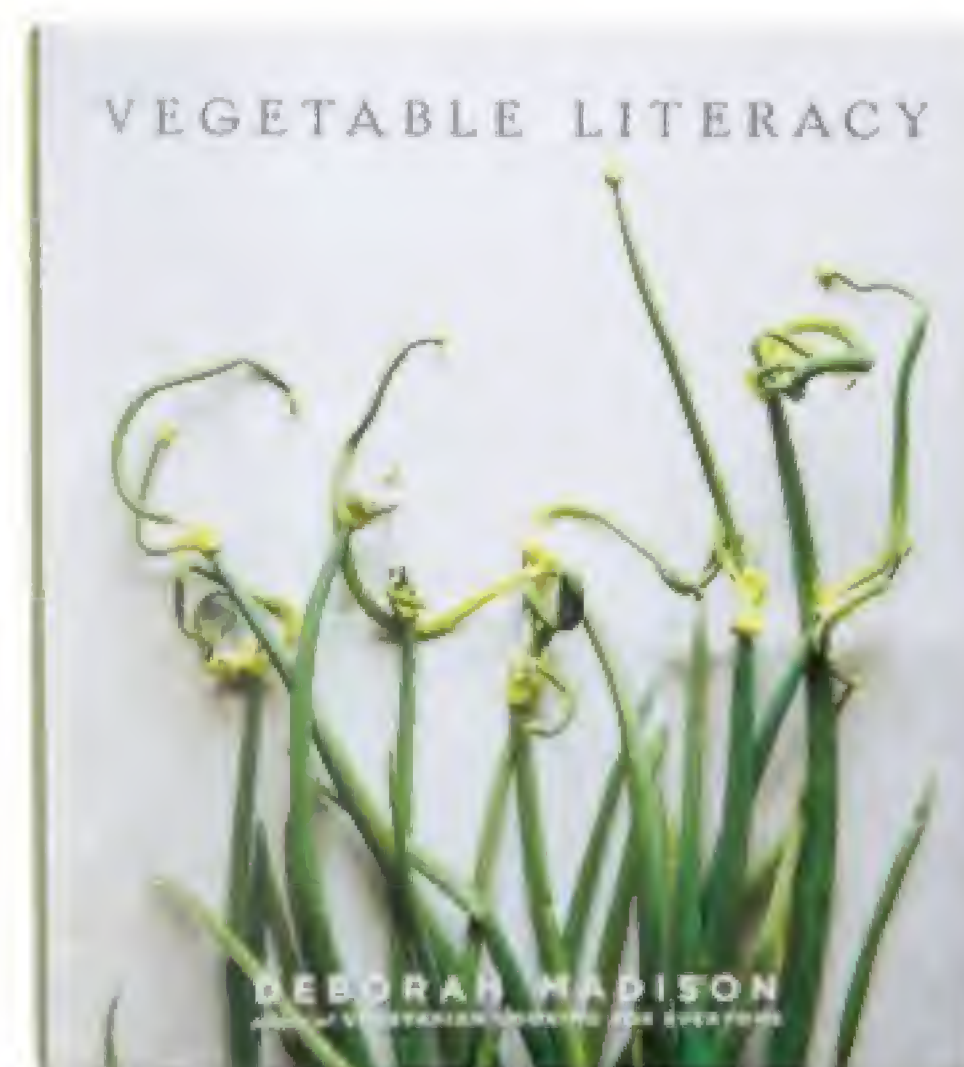
Wonderfully thirst-quenching and approachable, the style is great for pairing with sausages and other hearty foods served in Cologne beer halls. Those halls are the only places to experience some of my favorite kölsches, not to mention the ritual of drinking them. In 1985, recognizing the singularity of its beer, the Cologne Brewers Association campaigned successfully for some of the strictest regulations governing beer production anywhere. These days, when even the size and shape of the *stange* is legislated, breweries must be located in and around

**Kölsch is a beer that enhances meals with a sly complexity that sneaks up and hooks you**

Cologne to call their beer kölsch. Many of these don't send their beer abroad.

But some imports are available here at home, along with American beers made in the kölsch style—Saint Arnold Brewing Company's zesty Fancy Lawnmower beer, New Holland's more austere Full Circle, Four Peaks' bracing Sunbru. Drinking these, I've found that the style also goes great with milder summer foods. Salads, grilled fish, steamed seafood—kölsch never overpowers these dishes, but rather enhances the meal with a sly complexity that sneaks up and hooks you. —Stephen Beaumont

THE PANTRY, [page 108](#): Information on finding Indo-Chinese restaurants in Rotterdam, ordering kölsch beer, and more.



Book Review

## Family Ties

When I think back on the years I've spent cooking in my mother's kitchen—from my pint-size days when she'd plop me on a stool to help whisk oil into a vinaigrette for salad, to the Father's Day feast we cooked after I graduated from culinary school that began with a fresh pea soup—one sauce-spattered cookbook is always in my mind's eye. Deborah Madison's *Greens* (Bantam Books, 1987), named for the San Francisco farm-to-table restaurant she helmed, shifted the spotlight from meat to vegetables back in the 1980s. It was one of my mother's favorites and still remains on a shelf in her pantry. With *Vegetable Literacy*, Madison's latest, I'm thrilled to have a book by this seasoned chef to spatter on my own. Madison—chef, author, sustainable-eating booster—organizes her new herbivore tome by plant family. One chapter focuses on the carrot family, which includes carrots, celery, cilantro, chervil, and parsnips; another on the sunflower family, with its cardoons, chamomile, tarragon, and artichokes. These connections encourage an impromptu approach to dinner. Don't have an onion? Swap in a leek. What to pair with parsnips? Go for its cousin chervil. Madison discusses everything from botany to history to cookery, and her prose is so approachable that you'll actually look forward to cozying up in bed and reading about kohlrabi. Helpful kitchen tips ("much of the flavor and nutrition in carrots resides in the skins, so it's better to scrub...than peel") run below each vegetable's introduction; the photographs by former *SAVEUR* editors Christopher Hirsheimer and Melissa Hamilton are Cézanne-esque still lifes; and the recipes are simple yet often superb. Such is the case with Madison's melon and cucumber salad with black pepper and mint, which, with its complementary cool, sweet flavors, highlights melons' relationship to the cucumber. (Both are part of the cucurbit family.) Emboldened by her teachings, I swapped in cantaloupe for Madison's honeydew. The dish took minutes to prepare and was everything I want from a great summer salad: cold and crunchy, with a floral pop from the mint. I'm looking forward to making it in my mother's kitchen, and this time, I'll be the one with the recipe. —Sophie Brickman

FROM LEFT: INCAMERA/STOCK/ALAMY; AARON ZEBROOK; CHELSEA POMALES





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“Being creative with ingredients gives you the ability to build deeper flavors.”

“Enhancing the complexity and depth of a dish all comes down to the details. Fresh herbs, garlic, shallots and thyme really make a big difference. Have them—and butter—at the ready, especially when searing a steak. Add the butter to make a beautiful, brown glacé; toss in the herbs at the end to add aromatic essence to the meat.”



**Executive Chef Brendan McHale**  
TastingTable.com, New York

“The new Jenn-Air® Accolade Downdraft Ventilation System is really powerful. The key to searing and caramelizing is to do it over a really hot burner, which naturally produces a lot of smoke. The curved hood impressively captures the smoke from high-heat cooking. And its design is sleek, too. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

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Check out a brief guide to some of our regions.





**SOUTHEAST COAST** Home to locally owned restaurants, sandfloored beachside spots and BBQ wood shacks, the Southeast Coast has everything from seafood to local favorites, like Fry Jacks for breakfast. Placencia has the most restaurants in Belize. When you're done eating, hit the water for kayaking, snorkeling, diving, saltwater fly fishing and whale-shark watching. There's also 16 miles of sandy beach for relaxing.



**CENTRAL COAST** Creole is the food of all Belizeans. The Central Coast has the largest density of Creole Belizeans in the country. While you're in the area, try a "boil up," a stew of fish, potatoes, plantains, and cassava with other vegetables and eggs. Another favorite is stew chicken with rice and beans. The Central Coast has many historical landmarks from our past, such as a British colony, as well as fantastic beaches, snorkeling, fishing and scuba diving.



**WESTERN** The home of street food is Western Belize. Everything from Creole to Guatemalan, to Mexican to BBQ, is all at its best out west. The twin towns of San Ignacio and Santa Elena are the home of BBQ in Belize. There's also a small movement to take all that is great about street food and amplify it in the restaurant setting. Either way, it's all good. Western Belize is also home to many archaeological sites, like Cahal Peck. Jaguar Paw is great for cave tubing and zip lining. Great food, great places to explore—get here soon



**SOUTHERN** Head South for some traditional Garifuna dishes like sere lasus (fish soup with plantain balls) or cassava dumplings. They hit the spot after watching a traditional Garifuna drum and dance presentation. The Southern district also serves as the gateway to activities like off-shore fishing, river trips, caving, bird watching and Maya ruins.



**NORTH ISLANDS** The North Islands are all about seafood. Lobster, conch, snapper, grouper and any other tasty fish from the surrounding waters are on the menu at our beachside restaurants and stands. Check out the Hol Chan Marine Reserve and Shark Ray Alley for snorkeling and scuba diving. It's some of the best in the world and, along with the great food, you won't forget it.



**NORTHERN** Spanish and Yucatan Maya known as Mestizos populate the Northern district. While you're here, try Mestizo favorites like esabache (onion soup), salbutes (fried corn tortillas with chicken and toppings of tomatoes, onions and peppers), or garnaches (fried tortillas with refried beans, cabbage and cheese). For exploring, don't miss Lamanai, home to one of our largest Maya sites. Take a boat ride to the site for an upclose look at wildlife, like cranes and crocodiles.



**REEF** Get ready for a picnic, reef-style. Anything from seafood to BBQ chicken or pork is grilled up and usually served with fresh fruit and beans and rice. It's a great way to refuel after a day of diving in our amazing reef. The Great Blue Hole is a scuba diver's underwater paradise. We like to think it's a food lover's paradise, too. See for yourself.



DISCOVER HOW TO BE





Glenna Hollis, a co-owner of the Country Dove Tea Room in Elk City, Oklahoma, with a French silk pie.



# ROUTES

BEANS  
AND RICE.

## Glory Road

Route 66 is America's most iconic thoroughfare—and its most delicious

BY JANE AND MICHAEL STERN PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES ROPER

**T**HE POP CULTURE PERSONALITY of Route 66 never had much to do with food. The Joad family in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, traveling down the "road of flight," barely could sustain themselves; in the song "(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66," songwriter Bobby Troup moves too fast to stop for a meal; and do you remember what, if anything, anybody ate in the TV show *Route 66*?

It was a main road west for generations of Americans, and even now, decades after it was decommissioned as a federal high-

**Chicken-fried steak, smokehouse beef jerky, and burgers at joints with carhops make Oklahoma especially memorable**

way (replaced by four-lane arteries that barrel across the country where Route 66 meandered), it remains a bonanza of colorful eateries that sprang up over the years to serve hungry wayfarers. Our Route 66 must-eat itinerary from Chicago to Los Angeles ranges from prototypical corn dogs at Cozy Dog in Springfield, Illinois, to Mitla Café in San Bernardino for "Real Mexican Food," as the sign boasts, since the late 1930s. But with more miles of the original highway than any other state, Oklahoma is especially endowed with memorable meals—wacky or delicious and sometimes both. As we have followed the Sooner State Glory Road from the Kansas border to the Texas panhandle, we've

found the sort of dining experiences that make Oklahoma especially roadfood-rich: superlative chicken-fried steak, smokehouse beef jerky, and burger joints with automated carhop service.

Heading southwest on what is now known as the Will Rogers Turnpike, for Oklahoma's favorite son, our first stop is at Clanton's Café in the tiny town of Vinita. Dating back to the highway's dirt road origins (when, it is said, the café's namesake, Sweet Tater Clanton, used to stand outside and bang a pot with a wooden spoon to attract passing motorists), this 86-year-old gathering place is a reminder of just how good a chicken-fried steak can be. Tender, lightly battered, griddle-cooked, and followed by a slice of fragile-crust banana cream pie made by Sweet Tater's granddaughter, Melissa Patrick, it just doesn't get much better.

About 70 miles on, Tulsa, the hometown of Cyrus Avery, the highways commissioner who championed the creation of Route 66 (and who made sure it went by the place where he lived), is a treasure trove. The riches include White River Fish Market, where you pick fresh catfish, trout, or flounder from a glass case and get it fried or broiled to order; Mahogany, where top-dollar steaks are preceded by an iceberg salad dressed with blue cheese; and Wilson's Bar-B-Que, whose tagline "You Don't Have to Have Teeth to Enjoy Our Meat" applies to the moist, velvety soft brisket. But we love Tulsa most for hamburgers. There's the Big Okie at Hank's Hamburgers, four juice-







A young diner digs into a stack of pancakes at the Rock Cafe in Stroud, Oklahoma.



oozing patties and four slices of cheese; the Westsider at Linda-Mar Drive-In, two seared patties, each topped with cheese, between slabs of buttered and grilled-crisp Texas toast; and the Double Deluxe at Freddie's Hamburgers, two quarter-pounders dripping American cheese and garlanded with a bouquet of lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, fresh onions, fried onions, and mustard (plus mayonnaise if you want), all stacked in an oversized bun. When you pick up a Double Deluxe, you instantly note how pliable the bun is. No matter how tender, it can't cling to its ample contents: The glistening patties want to slide out whichever side of the bun fingers aren't gripping, lettuce shreds tumble, pickles slip, onions squiggle, mayo oozes. It is a burger-eating adventure.

No restaurant exudes Route 66 charisma more than the Rock Cafe, built in Stroud, midway between Tulsa and Oklahoma City, in 1937 from boulders excavated to pave the highway. Talk about homestyle cooking!

**The glistening patties slide out of the bun, lettuce shreds tumble, pickles slip, onions squiggle, mayo oozes**

The kitchen's recipes are scribbled on 3" x 5" cards, wrinkled restaurant receipts, backs of envelopes, and yellowing paper scraps. But boss Dawn Welch says the recipes are no big deal. What matters is her 70-year-old grill, one of the original Wolfs. She explains: "It has a thin groove at the back that somehow holds the flavors right on top. This is a grill that was designed to make food taste amazing." Everything possible spends some time on the old iron flattop. That includes burgers, of course, but also ham for ham and beans, chili, sauerkraut, and even spätzle (a legacy of Dawn's Swiss-German ex-husband), which take the place of hash browns in a stupendous kitchen-sink side that includes peppers, onions, and two kinds of cheese.

The worthy splurge in Oklahoma City is prime beef at Cattlemen's Steakhouse in the stockyards. The rib eye into which we glide a knife is so intensely marbled that fat and muscle are inseparable. In an entirely different class—but equally delicious, and even more fat-rich—is barbecue at Leo's. Located in a dilapidated former gas station, this soulful outpost is so well-seasoned that a sign on the door reads "Due to high humidity, please watch your step." Yes, the floors are slick from air that is humid, but not humid

with plain, boring H<sub>2</sub>O. The moisture comes from unctuous smoke wafting out of a pit that produces unbelievably succulent ribs, hot links, and brisket.

Just west of Oklahoma City, El Reno is home to the onion-fried burger—a sphere of beef slapped onto the grill along with a fistful of thinly sliced onions. Originally created during the Depression, when beef was dear, the two are brutally mashed together as they sizzle, creating a package that is as much about the vegetal goodness of sweet caramelized onion as it is about beef. No need to specify onions when you order one at either of the following spots; they're included unless you expressly delete them. We love Sid's Diner, not only for its hamburger (better yet, double-meat burger), but also for its sociable waitresses, including Trista, who, thankfully, coaxed us to order the banana cherry milk shake. For the full flavor of the highway when it used to be America's Main Street, check out Jobe's Drive-In, which still sports Touch-O-Matic carhop service, a setup that allows you to order from the parking lot. Robert Sanders, who has been at the grill for 43 years, serves mostly locals now but says, "We used to get a lot more tourists back when the road went through."

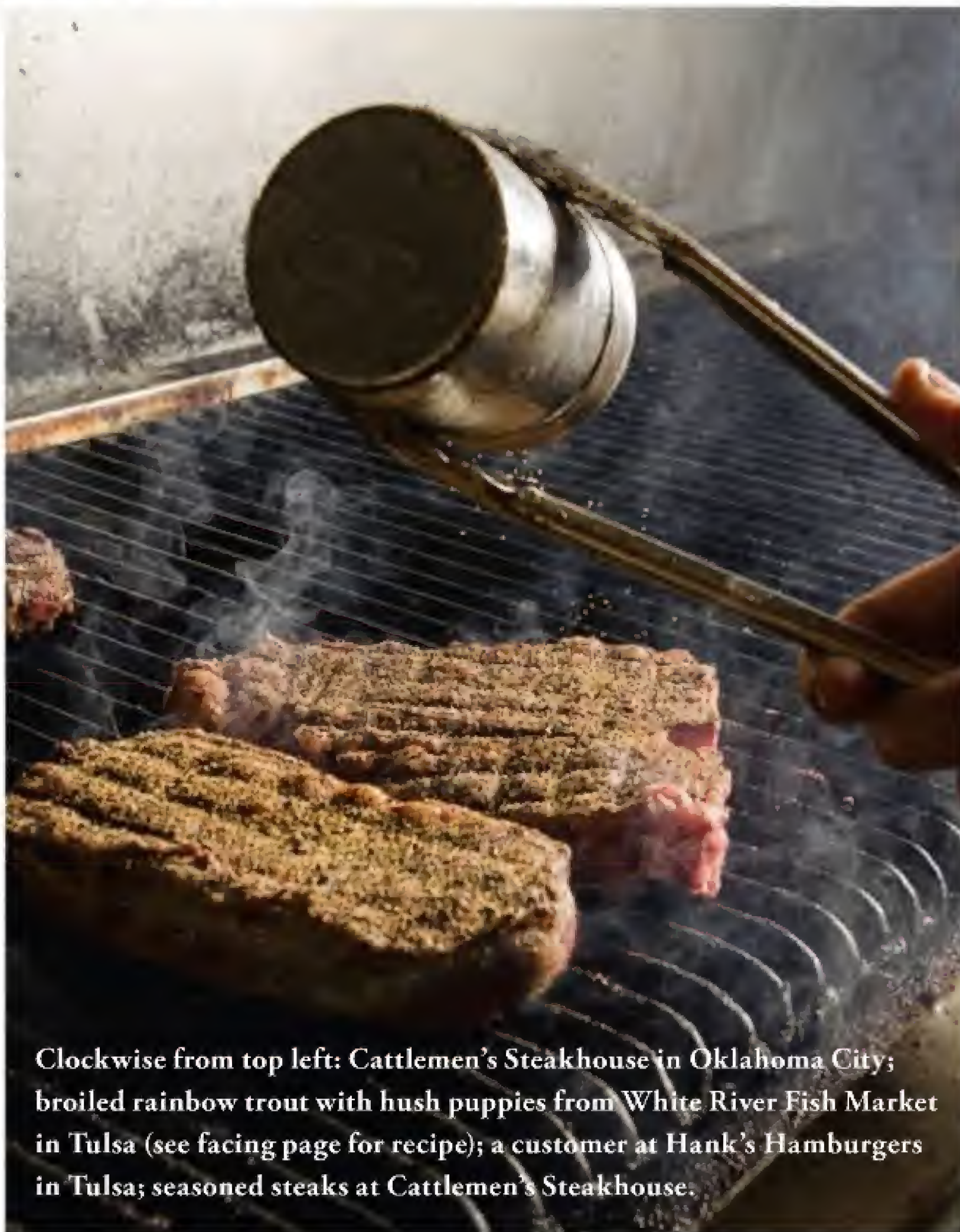
When we pull into the gravel lot outside of Jigg's Smokehouse in Clinton, we count 12 pickup trucks, one SUV with Oklahoma Highway Patrol markings, and a single sedan—our Mazda rental. Inside, when customers see us taking pictures, they merrily offer to let us photograph their Pig Sickle and Wooly Burger sandwiches—outlandishly large piles of aromatic smoked meats—and want to know if we've yet had a chaw of the intensely flavorful beef jerky the proprietor's wife, Becky Klassen, makes. In dining rooms decorated with thousands of business cards, portraits of John Wayne and Marty Robbins, and a Christmas wreath made of green and red shotgun shells, these people are country-proud.

Farther west, in Elk City, the Country Dove Tea Room is a lunch-only eatery attached to a Christian bookstore and country furnishings emporium. The ladies here are every bit as solicitous as the gents at Jigg's, but in this case they implore us to sample their heart-shaped muffins and little squares of lemon pear Jell-O salad, both of which are part of what the menu calls a Delite Plate,

SAVEUR contributing editors JANE and MICHAEL STERN are the authors of *Roadfood.com*.







Clockwise from top left: Cattleman's Steakhouse in Oklahoma City; broiled rainbow trout with hush puppies from White River Fish Market in Tulsa (see facing page for recipe); a customer at Hank's Hamburgers in Tulsa; seasoned steaks at Cattleman's Steakhouse.

ILLUSTRATIONS: BRENDA WEAVER



built around a sandwich. We went for the signature sandwich, chicken avocado. It is ladies' lunch supreme: chicken and avocado pulverized into a mild mash, served on your choice of a whole wheat roll or flakey croissant, with a few frilly leaves of lettuce. There is nothing demure, though, about Country Dove's French silk pie, which is lasciviously chocolaty, smooth, and dense, perched on a crust that is little more than ground nuts and butter, and topped with a ribbon of sweet whipped cream. Proprietors Glenna Hollis and Kay Farmer blush when they recall the author who tried the pie and later wrote that he wasn't sure if he should eat it or smear it all over his body. Sensual, salacious dessert in a Christian tearoom: There are all kinds of kicks on Route 66. 🐾

### Broiled Rainbow Trout with Hush Puppies

Serves 2-4

Butterflied freshwater fish is slathered in butter and spices before broiling in this recipe (pictured facing page) from Tulsa's White River Fish Market. Corn-laden hush puppies are served alongside fish at the restaurant, which has been open since 1932.

For the hush puppies:

- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 cup buttermilk
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tsp. hot sauce
- 1 8 1/4-oz. can cream-style corn
- 1/2 jalapeño, stemmed, seeded, and roughly chopped
- 1/2 small red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and roughly chopped
- 1/2 small yellow onion, roughly chopped
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Canola oil, for frying

For the trout:

- 1/2 tsp. granulated garlic
- 1/4 tsp. celery seed
- 1/4 tsp. dried oregano
- 1/4 tsp. paprika
- 1/4 tsp. sugar
- 1/4 tsp. dried thyme
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 whole fresh rainbow trout (about 10 oz. each), butterflied (see right)

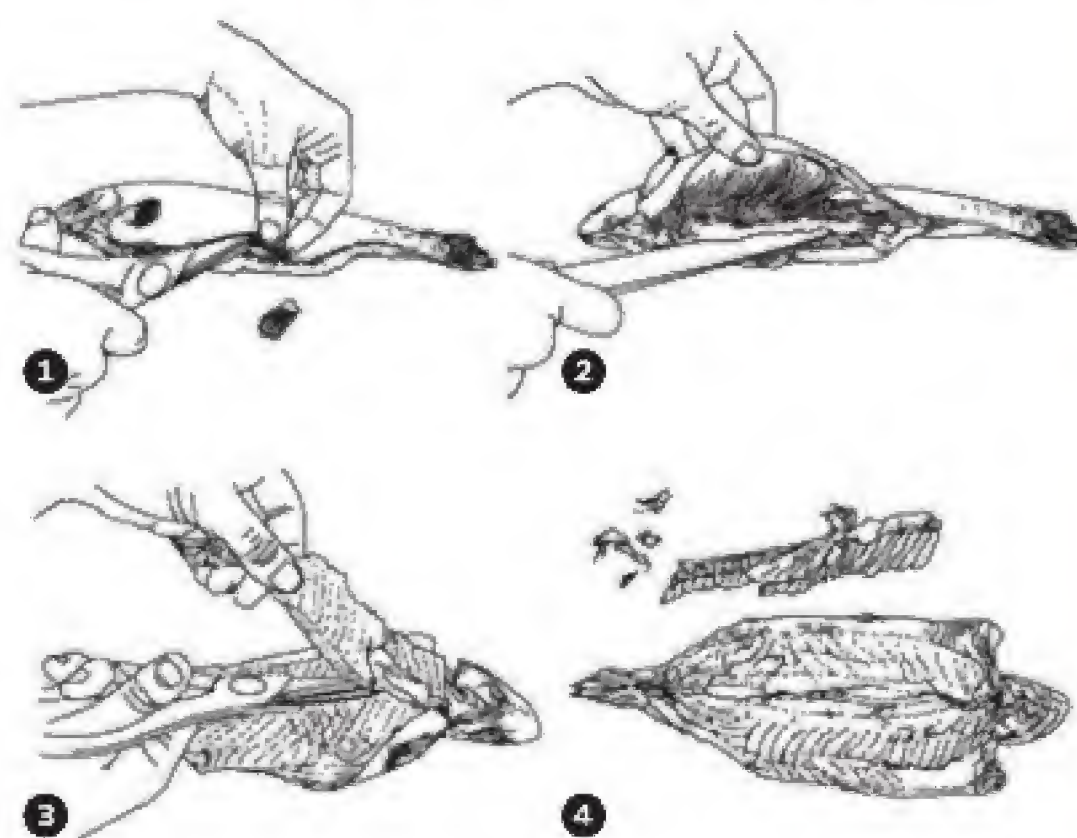
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- Lemon wedges, for serving

**1** Make the hush puppies: Whisk cornmeal, flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder in a large bowl. Pulse buttermilk, butter, hot sauce, cream-style corn, jalapeño, red pepper, onion, and black pepper in a food processor until almost smooth. Add buttermilk mixture to dry ingredients and stir together until combined. Cover batter with plastic wrap and refrigerate 10 minutes.

**2** Pour enough oil to reach a depth of 2" in a 6-qt. saucepan. Heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 350°. Using a 1-oz. scoop, drop 2 tbsp. of batter into oil, making sure to not crowd the pan. Cook, flipping once, until golden and cooked through, 2-3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer hush puppies to paper towels to drain; season with salt.

**3** Make the fish: Heat broiler to high. Mix garlic, celery seed, oregano, paprika, sugar, thyme, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Place fish side by side on a baking sheet and lay open, flesh side up. Spread butter over fish and season with spice mixture. Broil until golden and cooked through, 2-3 minutes. Serve with lemon wedges and hush puppies.

### BUTTERFLYING TROUT



Butterflying a whole trout entails removing the ribs and backbone in order to lay the fish flat. Use a sharp, flexible knife to best navigate the tiny bones. **1** Place the cleaned fish on a work surface with its belly facing you. Using kitchen shears, remove the back and belly fins. **2** Starting at the tail, slide the knife between the flesh of the fish and the lower edge of the rib cage. Make short gentle cuts toward the backbone, separating the meat from the ribs as you go. Turn the fish over and repeat this step on the other side. **3** Pull back the filleted flesh, exposing the ribs and backbone. Using kitchen shears, cut through the base of the ribs along the backbone. **4** Lift out the backbone and rib cage, and flatten the fish, skin down, on the work surface.

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## Age of Innocence

Pining for the exotic in a locavore world

BY JAY RAYNER



An advertisement for a fast food restaurant in London, 1980.

**G**ROWING UP IN A NORTHWEST LONDON Jewish family, I was haunted by a thought: that if my great-grandfather, Josef Burochowiz, had just been blessed with a little more stamina and had stayed on the boat a few days longer, I wouldn't have grown up in northwest London at all but instead in New York. I would have happily been one of those American Jews, living in the land of pastrami and bagels, where the buildings were taller, the skies bigger, and everybody was from somewhere else. I liked my foreignness but wanted everyone else to be foreign too. Then, one Saturday lunchtime in 1977, a little bit of America came to me.

My mother, a well-known health columnist, had been invited to a Saturday event at the American embassy. I have no idea why; it was just the sort of thing that happened to her. All I do recall was that it was odd because Saturday mornings were when my parents did the family food shop, so what were we to eat for lunch?

And yet, for the American embassy, Mom would make an exception. Lunchtime came and she was back and carrying with her a shallow cardboard box containing a couple dozen soft, round packages wrapped in thin, glossy, greaseproof paper, endowed with the mammarian curve of golden M's. She had brought us hamburgers. A lot of them.

With hindsight, this could be viewed as a blatant act of cultural imperialism. The first branch of McDonald's had opened in Woolwich, southeast London, in 1974, though it had yet to impact me. I hadn't been there. Now here was the U.S. Embassy—the U.S. government itself, on UK soil—handing out McDonald's hamburgers to a woman who, as a high-profile journalist, could influence opinion. Perhaps there was a CIA briefing document somewhere outlining how the American version of freedom could be spread about the world by the judicious distribution of free McDonald's hamburgers to tastemakers.

The truth of our hamburger windfall was probably a little more prosaic: The embassy had got McDonald's to cater the event, and seeing a number left over and being appalled by the waste, my mother had offered to take them home, thereby dealing with the lunch issue. Whatever the cause, I was delighted.

I had never eaten hamburgers like them. Even cold, there was the intense sweetness of the bun and the juicy meat of the patty and the punch of the pickles. This was what America meant to me: food with a certain shamelessness, lunch with its knickers around its ankles. And,

JAY RAYNER is the author of the e-book *A Greedy Man in a Hungry World* (William Collins, 2013).

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— ANOTHER NEWTONISM —

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7g of whole grain per 22g serving

thankfully, I soon found more options from across the pond to try out. Around this time, an American expatriate called Gabriel Gutman launched the Dayvilles chain of ice cream parlors in Britain, based on America's popular Baskin-Robbins.

"There is superb cream in England and excellent chocolate," he told *The New York Times*. "Nobody ever married the two together. It's been driving me crazy for years." The actress Lee Remick, who had just starred in *The Omen* and was living in London, was more savage. "They don't know from ice cream in this country," she said, as if identifying the very heart of Britain's famed malaise. Remick had a point. Until Dayvilles arrived you could have any flavor you liked in Britain—as long as it was strawberry, chocolate, or vanilla. Plus the ice cream itself wasn't creamy; it was hard and icy. British ice cream was a beautiful promise, broken.

And now here, praise the gods of greed, was Dayvilles, which, like its role model, proclaimed 32 flavors but seemed to offer many more. There was banana split and bubble gum flavored ice cream, toffee nut crunch, and something called peppermint fudge ripple, which, to a fat boy yet to navigate the hormonal rapids of puberty, sounded seriously naughty and indulgent. This was what America meant to me: It was a place where you could get 32 flavors of ice cream, and one of them was called peppermint fudge ripple.

It didn't end there. In 1977 another American expat called Bob Payton opened the Chicago Pizza Pie Factory off St James's, and then a handful of Rib Shacks. Music blared, everything came slathered in a sticky vinegary barbecue sauce, and cutlery was optional. We over-privileged kids would go to these restaurants without our parents when we were 13 or 14 and play at being grown-up, while really we were just getting a big sugary, salty hit, eating with our hands, throwing away all of the breeding of our London childhoods. For an hour or two, we

were American, and we'd become American through food. It tasted far better than eating British did.

FOOD IN 1970S BRITAIN WAS NOT, for most people, hugely encouraging. The generation that had lived through the Second World War still held sway and, as a result, gastronomic indulgence was frowned upon. There were a few restaurants of note, but in your average British home vegetables were still boiled until they could be eaten without the aid of teeth, and exotica rarely went beyond a rudimentary *coq au vin*.

In our house, fortunately, things were a little different. We were restless in matters of the plate and had what were regarded then as sophisticated tastes for the cuisines of countries like India and China, places we had no expectation of ever visiting. My mother may not have had much time for trends in décor or couture, but when it came to the kitchen, she cared greatly. She made fragrant chicken curries with Bombay duck, a pungent salted and dried fish from India. She bought packs of snails imported from France and laboriously stuffed the canned snail meat into shells filled with garlic butter. Robert Carrier's *Great Dishes of the World*, first published in 1963 and reprinted in updated editions for years after, gave recipes from the farthest reaches of the planet. The publication in 1961 of Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* seemed to have turned every aspirational American cook into the budding chef of his or her very own little Left Bank bistro.

She, cooking these international meals, and I, dreaming of hamburgers and fudge-flavored ice cream, were on trend. Back then, on both sides of the Atlantic for those who could afford it, the right way for the fashionable to eat depended upon exotica.

Today, though, the whirligig has turned; we're meant to be dismis-

— ANOTHER NEWTONISM —

## THESE BANANA TIMES CALL FOR FUDGE MEASURES



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8g of whole grain per 31g serving



— ANOTHER NEWTONISM —

ON THE  
**ROAD OF LIFE**  
**LET A**  
**BERRY**  
**RIDE SHOTGUN**



sive of imports, to be locavores. In Britain, if we dream of American hamburgers, they are no longer from McDonald's. Rather, they are supposed to be made from rare breeds of British beef, raised on local farms. We have come to understand that this is the truly sustainable way to eat; that, with the global population rising to 9 billion by 2050, to do otherwise is to play fast and loose with the planet's ecosystem merely to satisfy our appetites. Hence, we eat local food. Of course each way of eating—21st-century local and mid-century exotic—makes its own emotional kind of sense. We nurture each other through food and show our love through it. We celebrate and we commiserate through it. Localism, with its sweet wash of neighborliness and community, has a logic. To be honest, though, it's nowhere near as much fun as the kind of juvenile thrills I once got from cooling McDonald's hamburgers or flavors of ice cream with triple-barreled names involving the word fudge.

Indeed, as a result of research for a new book on food security in the 21st century, my adult self has come to understand that eating like a locavore is *not* the most sustainable option. In the late '90s when the term "food miles" was first coined by the British academic Tim Lang, professor of food policy at City University in London, it was simple and easily understandable: The farther your food traveled from field to fork, the worse for the environment it was by dint of the amount of fuel that journey took. It gave environmentally minded consumers a simple way to judge whether they should buy a product. Had it come from as close by as possible? If yes, then into the basket it went.

The problem is it's too simple. Just as eating chicken curry in 1970s Britain didn't make you sophisticated, so eating locally doesn't actually make you an ethical eater. The petrochemicals used in farming and in fertilizers, the energy to build tractors as well as to run them and to erect farm buildings and fences—all of that (and so much more) has to be

measured against yield. When you do that, you discover the proportion of your food's carbon footprint caused by its transport is somewhere between just 2 and 4 percent. What matters is not where your food was grown but how it was grown.

Take the McDonald's hamburgers I so adored as a kid. It can take up to 20 pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef. So even if the cow that gave its life for my lunch lived in my garden, one could argue that what would really matter is the volume of carbon inputs that produced the soya it ate. Or to put it another way, a grass-fed animal raised a thousand miles from me would have a much smaller carbon footprint than a grain-fed one raised out back.

WHAT WOULD THE FAT-CHEEKED boy I once was, craving the caloric hit of Dayvilles ice cream and McDonald's hamburgers, have made of all this? What would my late mother, with her snails and menus culled from the pages of Robert Carrier, have thought? I think she would have been baffled. Back then we knew nothing about the way a debate around the environment and concerns about industrial agriculture would eventually come to dominate the conversation about how and what we ate. We had other worries. In the 1970s we had the Arab-Israeli wars, Vietnam, the oil crisis, and so much more. All of that was discussed around my family's dinner table—there was a lot of politics in our house when I was a kid. But dinner, the food actually on that table? We never considered it a part of it. Dinner was just dinner.

And sometimes when I think back to a time before the wars over localism and Big Ag, to those days when it was still possible to be thrilled by the first taste of a new kind of hamburger without any of the worry of how it became a hamburger, of how it arrived in its perfectly wrapped packaging and into my hand, I can't deny a certain wistfulness.


— ANOTHER NEWTONISM —

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# SOURCE

## Milk Fed

Midwest dairies try something new

BY SUMMER MILLER

ONE SUMMER NIGHT a few years ago in Omaha, Nebraska, I had a local cheese awakening. It happened at a picnic during outdoor Shakespeare at Elmwood Park. There were plenty of snacks, but one rose above the rest: quark, a young, soft, European-style cheese made from organic grass-fed cows' milk an hour away in Raymond, Nebraska. Tangy, bright, and, as I later discovered, as tasty baked into cheesecake as it is spread on a baguette, it was my introduction to a new generation of homegrown cheeses.

Apparently at one time, this part of the country produced nearly half of America's dairy supply. But over the past decade, as the price of milk see-sawed, farmers turned to cheese making to stabilize their income. This practical endeavor evolved into an artisanal one when it became clear that, owing to the area's noted plant diversity, the products possessed a rich grassland flavor unique among American cheeses.

"Cheese makers didn't start out trying to make masterpieces," says Krista Dittman of Branched Oak Farm, a dairy she owns with her husband Doug. Dittman is the talent behind that eye-opening quark, as well as a line of nuanced cheeses that have captivated chefs and home cooks alike. Attempt d'Bleu, a sweet, grassy blue, is an ideal topper for wedge salad or steak. The pungent Laughing Priest, a washed rind raw milk cheese that's aged until gooey, can hold its own among similar Old World styles.

One state over, Iowa's Milton Creamery has been using pastured milk from nearby Amish farms to make its standout cheddars. Flory's Truckle, clothbound and coated in a lard seal, is the kind of sharp cheddar that will transform your grilled cheese, while Prairie Breeze has the nutty praline crackle of aged Gouda. It's excellent baked into quiche, or, as with the quark, simply eaten out of hand. Prices start at \$4 for a half-pound of quark at [brandedoakfarm.com](http://brandedoakfarm.com) and [miltoncreamery.com](http://miltoncreamery.com).

MICHAEL KRAUS

*Attempt d'Bleu*

*Laughing Priest*

*Prairie Breeze*

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*Flory's Truckle*



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IMMER BESSER



# Golden Days

For one writer, a spa trip is the key to recapturing a youth of delicious excess

BY GAEL GREENE

**I**N MY NEUROTIC NEED not to be late, my partner Steven and I arrived at the Bordeaux train station hours early. We were on our way to nearby Eugénies-Bains to splurge on the cooking of the great French chef Michel Guérard. I settled in a seat looking directly at a PAUL bakery kiosk selling our favorite baguettes. “Shall we get one for the train?” Steven asked.

“We just had breakfast,” I said. “It would be insane. At 1:30 we’ll be eating lunch. And then comes dinner.”

I watched the sign board. Hours passed. Our train to Mont-de-Marsan arrived. “Quick,” I suddenly decided. “Let’s get a baguette.” I grabbed a salami sandwich. “This too.” He gave me that look. I was going to take only one bite of the salami, but damn, it was so good, salty, greasy, spicy. I ate my half, the humble preamble to a day and night of three-star dining that would double as a trip down memory lane.

Before there were thousands of restaurant critics in the blogosphere, there were only three or four who mattered. And the blonde one was me. Starting in late 1968, bankrolled by my expense account at *New York* magazine, I had the first and last word about New York’s most rarified restaurants. But for serious culinary ecstasy in those days, I needed to take my mouth to France. Happily, the magazine agreed. I ate seafood at Le Duc,

GAEL GREENE is a restaurant critic, writer, and cofounder of Citymeals-on-Wheels. Her last article for *SAVEUR* was “Le Bernardin” (Jan./Feb. 2012).



Chef Michel Guérard’s lobster *Américaine* with asparagus and tomatoes. Visit [saveur.com/guerard](http://saveur.com/guerard) for recipe.





What's luring  
investors to Asia?



duck at La Tour d'Argent, the pastry-wrapped bass at Paul Bocuse. And I marked a path to a working class suburb outside Paris where the young chef Michel Guérard was wowing seasoned gourmands.

Of all the practitioners of nouvelle cuisine, Guérard was, for me, the most brilliant. But I suppose he will be best remembered—celebrated and, by some, snorted over with derision—as the creator of the *cuisine minceur*, “slimming cuisine,” which slashed the fats but, through clever use of vegetable purées and other low-cal ingredients, kept the flavor. A committed gourmand, Guérard needed thinning himself. With marriage to Christine Barthélémy, daughter of a thermal-spa dynasty, he moved from Paris to Eugénie-les-Bains in the southwest of France. There in 1974, he invented zero-calorie *fromage blanc* sauce for veal and the much-imitated plate-size glazed apple tart on one thin tissue of pastry. He lost five kilos.

Given my job, it was no surprise that I would be invited to be one of the first guests—shall I say *victimes*?—when the newlyweds opened a country hotel steps from the family spa. I lost five kilos too.

In the years after my article on slimming Michel and Christine's way came out, they expanded their empire, with costly suites and a luxury private spa, and I went often. “The First Slimming Village of France,” the sign warned at the entrance to sleepy Eugénie. In truth, there was indulging too. I might lunch on an exquisitely sauced smidgen of lobster and an orb of sorbet to oblige his diet-cooking obsession. But at night, I reveled in the three-star Michelin chef's *carte gourmande*, filled with many fantastically caloric offerings for guests who were not watching their waistlines, devouring such decadence as a foie gras pot-au-feu with truffle sauce.

Decades later the memories were still vivid. So when I realized that a lecture gig would take me and my guy to nearby Bordeaux, I decided we must get to Eugénie. I would spring for the splurge. I'd not been back since 1998; I rarely get to France these days. No longer on the masthead with a pampering expense account, I now review restaurants on my own website, and I pinch pennies and make my guests share because the bill is on me. The world has shifted.

But I was still hearing raves about Guérard. Of all the rock stars who had championed nouvelle cuisine, he was perhaps the only one of his generation still actively inventing, and I was eager to measure his success once more. I suppose I was also looking forward to recap-

turing the decade when culinary thrills were new and I was exercising my power to inspire a fuss, traveling haute on the hog on someone else's dime. Unlike in the old days, our stay would be brief—I was not about to toss in another \$1,500 plus tips for a second night in Eugénie. But I made sure that we would make the most of our 26 hours and arranged for us to eat four meals. In my youth, such an intense dining marathon would have been a typical lark.

The Guérards sent a taxi to take us to Eugénie. Our timing was perfect for lunch at La Ferme aux Grives, the couple's inexpensive restaurant, where hams hang from the ceiling and pork roasts turn on a spit in the giant maw of the fireplace. It was a holiday Monday in France, the house was packed, and the two of them flew through the room, air kissing friends, neighbors, and me. Mindful of my budget, Steven and I ordered the \$60 lunch, burning our tongues on wonderfully moist *gougères* that were rushed to the table too hot to eat. Steven's snails arrived in seven lilliputian cups oozing garlicky butter, each topped

### **I was looking forward to recapturing the decade when I was exercising my power to inspire a fuss, traveling haute on the hog on someone else's dime**

with a toast chapeau. Seven. I like that touch. Better than six. While he shared with me, he dismissed my *tête de veau*, calf's head in thin anatomical slices with a tangy *sauce gribiche*. I was in heaven.

His rich lamb shoulder was deliciously caramelized from the fire. My chicken—a farm bird with gorgeous flavor—had come with buttery potato purée in one dish and in another, crusty penne, drowning in cream. The warm rhubarb tart was wondrously acidic. Afterward, we walked through the flower garden, photographing the irises, exciting the bees. I consciously willed myself to remember it. Spring.

I had prebooked the cheapest room in the Guérards' most modest hotel. But now that we were there, they insisted we stay in their new addition, L'Impératrice. I yielded without protest. Our vast imperial suite overlooked the garden. Everything was tied with bows.

Michel and Christine met us for champagne and canapés below in the lounge, glamorous with its tufted leather sofas, zebra upholstery, and Empire portraits. Michel was excited about his new work with professors

of medicine, devising cuisines for victims of various ailments—diabetes, obesity, heart disease, afflictions of the liver. The French are much ado with their livers. I found it hard to concentrate while nibbling charcuterie, caviar on teeny crêpes, and mini foie gras puffs, all while speaking bits of Franglais.

I want to say dinner was a miracle more wonderful by far than the thrilling lunch. Except it wasn't. The room at the Guérards' grandest restaurant, Les Prés d'Eugénie, was serene, the table poshly swathed in heavy linen, with herbs and two-tone purple pansies from the garden in water glasses, the captain in tailcoat, the service proper and not too stuffy. But Michel wanted me to have his *Zéphyr de Truffe* “*Surprise Exquise*” en Nuage, a truffled floating island on a delicate creamy soup. It was much too much fluff for me. Too many dishes riffed on tempura. Fried leaves fluttered everywhere. Disappointed, but trying not to be, I wondered: Did I order wrong? Why was the kitchen so hooked on frying as if tempura had just been invented? Should I have ordered a bottle of wine, not a glass, or even a bottle of white and another of red as I did in my expense account days? Would it help if I were tipsy? Or 30 years younger?

The next morning we had to have breakfast in time to have lunch in time to catch the train back to Bordeaux, so after a room service meal (wonderful), we packed and headed to the main dining room. I was game to tackle a gourmand lunch but in this quiet season with just a few cure-seekers in residence, the kitchen was only doing *la grande cuisine minceur*. And anyway, what would a visit to Eugénie have been without one last “slimming” meal? We settled into yet another exquisite alcove. Five small curls of perfectly cooked shrimp pierced by a green stem lined up on a puddle of sauce. A finger bowl followed. And then slices of veal in a foamy emulsion with mushrooms, haricots verts, a single miniature squash split in half, and lentils. The presentation was as beautiful as always. But something was off. It was, I realized with a start, me. I could feel my own appetite for drama, for excess, fighting against the sanity and restraint of this meal.

Then our car arrived. As we drove toward the station, I contemplated our visit. I loved the adventure. I was pleased that we did it. The luxury of our suite would be a story to wow rich friends. Michel seemed very jaunty. Still, in spite of everything we'd eaten in 26 hours, I was, I realized, still hungry. But, then, we were running for the train. No time to pause for a salami sandwich. 🐾

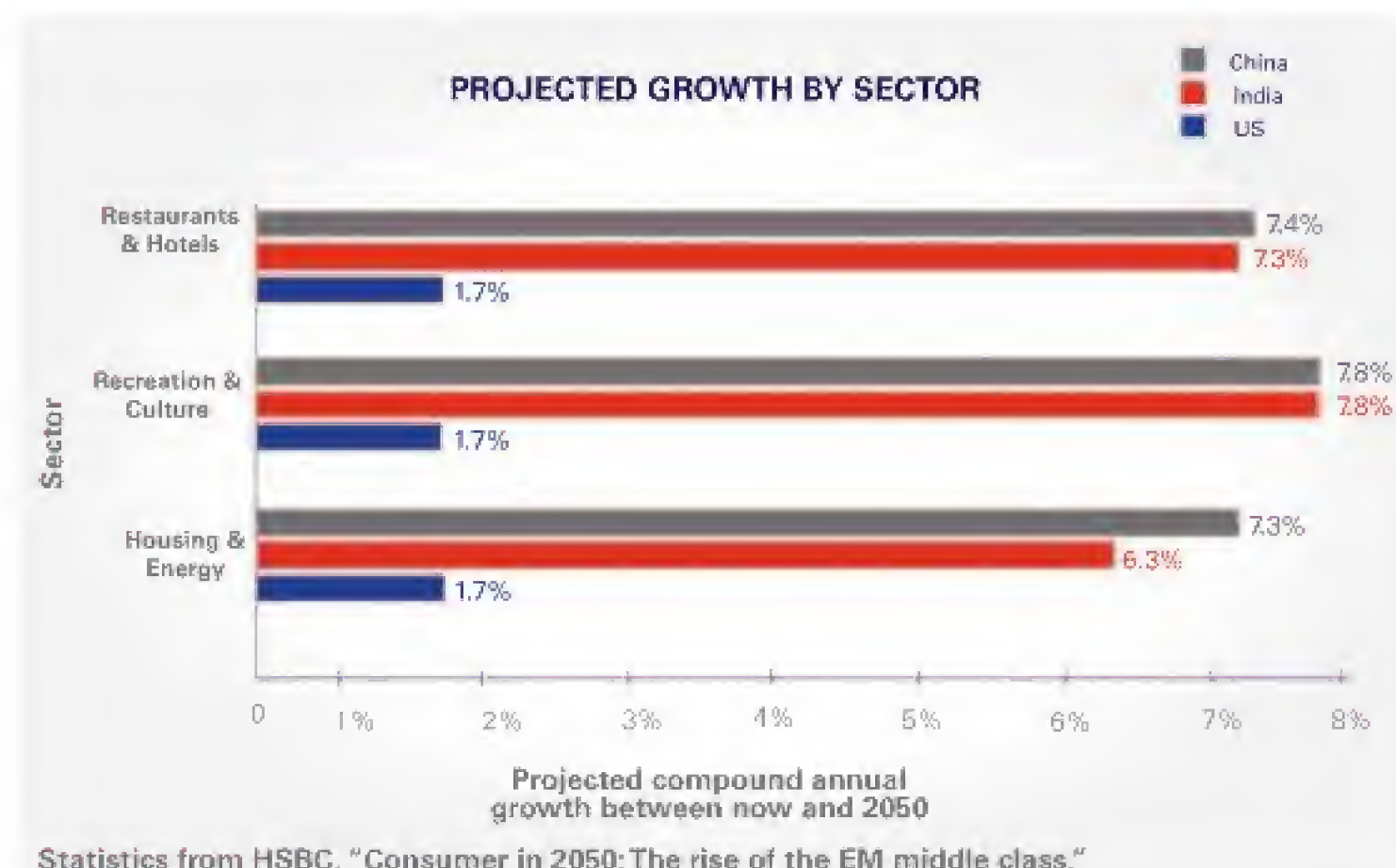




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<sup>1</sup>Source: HSBC, "Consumer in 2050: The rise of the EM middle class."

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# Bountiful



## KANSAS 54

At potluck suppers, wild game dinners, farmstead gatherings, and innovative new restaurants, Kansans eat the most delicious foods.

## OKLAHOMA 80

Oklahoma's culinary charms include sun-ripened melons, savory spoon puddings, and pies that'll knock your socks off.

## NEBRASKA 94

From succulent prime rib to the calzone's hefty, beefy cousin and the world's crispiest onion rings, Nebraska, it turns out, offers loads of great dishes.



# Prairie



Wheat and corn and incomparable beef, wild berries baked into the most luscious desserts, crisp summer salads, and the best fried chicken and chili imaginable—the southern Great Plains is a fantastic place to eat. Here, on flatlands teeming with life, farmers and ranchers, foragers and chefs pass down cherished recipes and share new additions to the region's rich culinary heritage. Join us as we visit Kansas, Oklahoma, and Nebraska, three states at the center of America's delicious heartland.

Combines harvest wheat in late summer in northwest Kansas.

JAMES ROPER











**T**HE UNITED STATES could be said to have a heart of flatness. What else is there in the southern Great Plains of Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma besides a flatness bigger than France, bigger than Spain, nearly as big as two Germanys—almost a quarter million square miles of big, flat stability?

Actually, if you know how to look at it, there's a lot here besides the flatness. For one thing, there's plenty to eat. Ask knowledgeable chefs in the southern Great Plains, and they'll tell you about ramps growing wild; porcinis and meaty oyster mushrooms sprouting on logs; quail nesting in sand plum thickets heavy with sweet-tart fruit; wild peaches, passion fruit, and puckery aronia berries that get dried and ground for seasoning meat. Even the cattails conceal treasures; some Choctaw Indians have taught chefs how to knock the tiny seeds from ripe cattail heads to use for flour.

All of this abundance comes from a place that looks empty because it is one of the flattest places on earth. Geologically speaking, all of North America is built upon a base called the North American craton, a massive, ancient super-plate that the other tectonic plates of our continent bump and grind around. The Rocky Mountains, for instance, is the place at which the flibbertigibbet California-containing land mass of the west bumped into the central craton; so unyielding is this core of North America that not a single volcano (usually typical on such occasions) emerged from this smashup, creating what geologists call a magmatic null, a noteworthy geologic event. Where else but pancake-like Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma could such a profound null be created?

The very steadiness of the North American craton is responsible for the region's majestic flatness, because this immovable land mass has been polished down by hundreds of millions of years of erosion by wind, by glaciers, by seas moving in and out, by rain and rivers. You read stories about Oklahomans who can't dig storm cellars because their ground is, in fact, rock; the land sits upon shale, sandstone, and clay. Many residents in the south central Great Plains are living on the stubby bases of mountains, ground down after half a billion years.

The flatness is not just a neutral thing, it is generative: It makes the prairie. Moisture, most often, comes from the sea; it rises, rolls in clouds and fog over the land, and turns to rain when it comes in contact with something that cools it—a mountain, a cold front, a low-pressure system. Washington and Oregon are wet from the moisture created by the



Pacific; Vermont and Georgia are green with the evaporation from the Atlantic. But by the time clouds make it all the way across the thousands of miles of land which guard Kansas, Oklahoma, and Nebraska from the sea, the water is mostly gone. In the days before irrigation, the old tallgrass prairie was tall because it got some water (though not enough to support many trees); the short-grass prairie was short because it got barely any water at all. The rain that does fall onto the great flatness filters down through the ground into an aquifer called the Ogallala, or High Plains aquifer

**Clockwise from top left:** cantaloupes in a truck bed at Howard Hitt's farm in Sickles, Oklahoma; Dax and Daiva Neal dance at a party at the Drummond Ranch near Hominy, Oklahoma; a ranch on the Kansas–Oklahoma border just north of Tulsa.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SHANNON STURGIS; JAMES ROPER; JAMES OSELAND



system, an underground reservoir stretching from Texas to South Dakota. Agriculture and hydrofracking are in some places emptying out this aquifer, which took eons to fill. Many worry that in some parts, the prairie is going to slip from a fertile flatness to something worse, something dry, empty, and full of nothing.

If that happens, the wind will assist. The wind, regularly whirled into tornadoes, is the other signature of the southern plains, and that flatness encourages it. Cold air floods down from Canada, with nothing to block its path; hot air floods up unhindered from the Gulf of Mexico. Then, from the west, both the polar jet stream and the subtropical jet stream stir by, like fingers flicking the edges of a pinwheel, kicking off the rotation. Solid, stable, whipped by winds—the heart of flatness. But the prairie is as diverse as a rain forest, and just as beautiful.

“Oklahoma is the number-two state in the country for plant diversity. We follow only Oregon,” explains Jackie Dill, who lives in Oklahoma and teaches wildcrafting, the art of turning wild plants into food, medicine, chicken feed, soap, and other things useful to people. “We have so many different eco-regions—wetlands and hardwood forests and prairie—and then the land rush brought European and other plants in. After the Dust Bowl era, desert plants moved in, too. I live on Iowa tribal land. I forage with a Lakota; my grandmother was Cherokee. What people forget is that for centuries this was the supermarket.” Buffalo berries are one of Dill’s favorite things to forage. They’re spicy and go beautifully with Iowa wild sage on one of the wild bison steaks that the chefs of the southern Great Plains prize so highly.

That steak might come from Dave Hutchinson’s Perfect 10 Buffalo Ranch in Rose, Nebraska, located in the Sandhills, an area of low, rolling dunes held in place by grasses covering nearly 20,000 square miles in the north-central part of the state. There the bison, who are never fed grain, spend their lives roaming free over wild pasture. Then one day Hutchinson makes a call to Rapid City, South Dakota, and a USDA-certified processing facility on wheels arrives. The rancher shoots a target animal with a thirty-aught-six rifle, and the 1,200-pound bison falls in its field, where it is winched up and butchered into more manageable chunks.

“They never know stress,” Hutchinson says. “They eat native grass, what they were meant to eat. Big bluestem, little bluestem, prairie sandreed, switchgrass, meadow grass, prairie cordgrass. A lot of people look at a



prairie and they see grass. But this is not grass like on a golf course. This is a whole other thing. Different clovers, bittersweet; in the fall it turns orange. Yucca. Cactuses. I guess you could say I’m a grass-type person; I like to look at it. It’s beautiful stuff. And it makes a good steak.”

It’s a steak that comes from a big, flat place that is so big, so flat, and so stable it’s easier to fly over, or drive straight through, than to consider in its vast majesty. —Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl, senior editor at Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine

**Home cook Christina Rafols holds her creamed corn casserole in her kitchen in Tonganoxie, Kansas (see page 72 for recipe).**



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When I first arrived in Kansas, stepped off the plane, and saw the big blue sky open up over the prairie, I knew I was home. This is a place that can free you in unexpected ways, a place where the Beat writer William Burroughs was as much a part of the local fabric as our church ladies with their chili suppers and homemade cinnamon rolls; where 60 different immigrant groups settled after the Civil War, each one seasoning the melting pot. Today you can taste their influence throughout the state: Mennonite beef and cabbage pies called bierocks, Volga German green bean dumpling soup, plenty of bison burgers, smoky chili, heirloom tomatoes, and iced sugar cookies. In a place where the weather is a cocktail of thunder, snow, blizzards, droughts, ice storms, and 100 degree days, it's no wonder we veer toward comfort when we eat. If we could click our ruby slippers three times, we'd be at the farm, where fried chicken comes to the table golden and crispy, the side dishes are all homemade, and a hefty slice of cake means that all is well. —*Judith M. Fertig, author of Heartland: The Cookbook (Andrews McMeel, 2011)*

# KANSAS





**Clockwise from left: carrots at the Lawrence farmers' market; teens in a truck bed in Lawrence; a field in Kansas' Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve; homemade salsa at Heartland Farm in Pawnee Rock.**



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: JAMES ROPER (2); JAMES OSELAND; JAMES ROPER





KANSAS

## Mom and Populist

Give the people what they want, thought Colby and Megan Garrelts when they opened Rye KC last winter in Leawood, Kansas. Being native Midwesterners themselves, the couple knew exactly what that meant: familiar, hearty fare in comfortable surroundings; a restaurant where friends, family, and co-workers could gather on school nights and break pork rinds together. But as award-winning chefs who also run the upscale Bluestem in Kansas City, the Garrelts had a reputation to uphold. So the food at Rye—jewel-box deviled eggs with a horseradish bite, ethereal potato dumplings, and Megan's banana cream pie—must be worthy of cloth napkins. It is. The Garrelts source ingredients largely from nearby, and hiring a huge staff that produces everything from the Parker House rolls to the quick pickles and beer-based vinegars in-house ensures that the food Midwesterners love is

better than what mother makes. The caramel corn takes you back to the state fair, even if you've never been to one; and the chicken livers taste like the finest foie gras wrapped in a crackling crust. If you never make it past the fried chicken section of the menu—a detour paved with country ham gravy—that's fine, though it's a shame to skip a side of creamy navy beans or perfectly roasted vegetables. And just like at home, no matter how much you put away, there's always space for a slice of lemon layer cake. —*Kerri Conan, Lawrence, Kansas-based freelance writer*

Extra-crispy fried chicken (see [page 74](#) for recipe), plus baked beans and sautéed green beans with tomato and red onion at the restaurant Rye KC in Leawood.

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Tomatoes grown at Heartland Farm in Pawnee Rock. Facing page: tomato-cheddar tart (see page 76 for recipe).







# SACRED GROUND

A Dominican sisterhood farms the past—and future—in Kansas

I DROVE NINE MILES past Heartland Farm before I realized I'd missed the place, as usual. The tiny (at least by Kansas standards) 80-acre farmstead is located, improbably, near Pawnee Rock—the exact epicenter of the heartland—in the middle of thousands upon thousands of acres of wheat, corn, soybeans, and cattle. Easy enough to miss, I suppose, in this vast sea of massive mono-cropped grids.

Retracing my path, I arrived just as the farm's owners, five Dominican nuns in their 60s, dressed in garden clogs and T-shirts, were finishing preparations for lunch. On the front lawn of their farmhouse, a large table was set. Platters of smoked sausage and caraway-flecked sauerkraut sat beside a tomato-cheddar tart. Wooden bowls held salads of tender greens and baby spinach from the garden. There were jars of bread-and-butter pickles and pickled okra from last year's harvest, and fresh-baked rye bread smeared with butter.

The sisters laughed as they filled their plates. Their food is unassuming but prepared with practiced hands, made almost exclusively from family recipes. "It comes down to what my grandmother made," says Sister Jane Belanger, a smiling woman with cropped silver hair. The nuns have been here since the 1980s, when they started the farmstead as a community that would steward the land. Over lunch, I learned that several of them descended from Volga Germans, who landed in Kansas after fleeing religious persecution in the 19th century. They brought with them Turkey Red wheat, a grain ideally suited to cultivation on the Plains.

I come here whenever I want to see the past, present, and future of (continued on page 62)











**Sister Jane Belanger sits with ripening vegetables at Heartland Farm in Pawnee Rock. Facing page: the chicken coop at Heartland Farm.**

JAMES ROPER (2)





Clockwise from top left: summer succotash salad; cucumber-pepper slaw, Roper-style; lentil and beet salad; Jude's perfect potato salad; green bean and peach salad; potluck guest Sue Ashline with her sweet potato salad with tomatoes and ginger. Recipes start on [page 72](#).

(continued from [page 59](#)) agriculture all at once. The past is evident in how the nuns spend their days, growing, cooking, and preserving whatever they have, and trading with neighbors for what they don't: a grass-fed steer from up the road, hay-baling services, honey. "We see these things as a gift," says Sister Jane.

The present is manifested in the center-pivot irrigation systems that surround the farm. And, as far as the future goes, while a sustainable farm run by a small group of nuns isn't competing with the huge agribusinesses out here, the sisters are, as the saying goes, being the change they wish to see in the world. Seated at the table, they pray for abundance—then, after washing the dishes, they get back to work. —Sarah Green, Wichita, Kansas-based writer

## SALAD SOCIAL

Lawrence is the potluckiest town in America

IT'S FRIDAY NIGHT, and I've got a date with three pounds of lentils. They're on the stove, gobbling up water and roiling like a stormy sea. Every 60 seconds I fish a couple out, desperate to capture them on the cusp of tender and firm. I always make way too much food. But that's what you're supposed to do for a potluck, right?

I'm preparing for a BYO shindig tomorrow at William Burroughs' old house in Lawrence, Kansas. (Yes, *that* William Burroughs; the eccentric Beat writer chose to wind down his life in this progressive town.) The Burroughs house is today the private residence of Tom King, a chef, gardener, and writer, who is hosting the First Annual Summertime Salad Social for a group of friends (roughly the same group invited to two soup potlucks before this). There will be 24 salads in attendance, accompanied by the people who made them.

Lawrence, population 89,000, might be the potluckiest town in America. At least the majority of the fêtes I've attended have been crowdsourced. Since moving to the area in the '90s, I've hauled dishes far and wide, happily without any spillage. In the heartland, people have been pitching in to party since the early days, when community gatherings were held in churches and simply called a "hotdish," after the casseroles that dominated the spread. Though the nature of the events may have changed, the spirit remains the same. When it comes to potlucks, each contribution seems to reveal something (continued on [page 66](#))



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# No Place Like Home

In the 1970s, when I was little, my family gathered at my grandmother's house in Kansas City every Sunday for dinner. Born in 1901, Grandma was an old-fashioned cook. She grew vegetables in her garden, kept chickens for eggs, and made everything from scratch. She made sure that everyone helped get dinner ready, and it was under her teaching that I learned to make homemade egg noodles and the lightest, fluffiest dumplings. My mom and her nine siblings all learned their way around the kitchen from Grandma, too. On Sundays they would each show up with a dish they'd made. I remember my Aunt Jackie's perfect meat loaf and her lemon pie crowned with meringue. My Aunt Sue could be counted on for a tuna noodle casserole. And Mom fried chicken like nobody's business. The method was nothing fancy, but the juicy meat and crisp crust were so, so good. My grandmother has since passed away, and we no longer have our Sunday ritual, but we do get together for just about every occasion you can think of. Take this past Mother's Day. As the host, I tackled the centerpiece, a glazed ham, and baked a creamed corn casserole to celebrate spring. I set the guests who arrived early to work—Bailey, 12, picked lilacs for the table, and her aunt, my youngest daughter Lindsay, made my grandmother's sugar cookies. Ashley, my oldest, brought the macaroni and cheese, gooey with cheddar and sour cream. Even though Grandma is gone, I know she would be proud that we're continuing with her traditions. She's with us in everything we cook. —Christina Rafols, assistant supervisor, Kansas Turnpike Authority



Bailey Webb, the author's granddaughter, with lilacs for a Mother's Day brunch in Tonganoxie, Kansas.

JAMES ROPER



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(continued from [page 62](#)) personal about the cook, a bit of inner psyche that might otherwise stay hidden. Maybe that's why people either love or hate them. They're public displays of intimacy, a communal meal where your food will be eaten and discussed by friends and strangers alike.

The next day at the Burroughs house, with my humongous bowl in hand, I arrive early to watch the show unfold. In comes an artfully displayed niçoise, whose jovial guardian has opted for a casual pretossed presentation. There's a potato salad, dubbed "perfect" by its maker with neither conceit nor sarcasm. Over there is a fuchsia bowl of clementines, fennel, and greens, the colors swirling like the tattoos on the woman who's brought it. There's a gutsy guy who hit the farmers' market that morning and winged the spicy cucumber-slaw number. One couple even brings gazpacho—slyly named "liquid salad" to qualify. Maverick.

While I serve myself, I do some math. If I divide the table into two rounds of 12 salads and take three bites from each, that's 72 forkfuls. At 20 seconds per, I'll have 24 minutes of eating, not including the time it takes to reload. And with one dish better than the next, everything demands revisiting.

I home in on the hulking platter of cooked and raw market vegetables drizzled with a sprightly pickled beet vinaigrette and scan the room. There's a pleasant buzz of chatter and clusters of folks balancing plates of multicolored confetti-like heaps. There are so many triumphs I don't know where to continue. Sue Ashline's gingery sweet potato salad studded with fresh tomatoes. And there's the fabulous summer succotash with fresh edamame swapped in for the lima beans. I spend a little time talking to Subarna Bhattachan, a chef from Nepal, about the way he used home-ground tahini to give his curried potato salad a toasty, nutty flavor. At the potlucks I've gone to in this town, I always walk away with a cooking tip like this.

Soon I'm discussing crunchy green beans and ripe, juicy peaches with a good friend. She's tweaked a magazine recipe to call her own, doctoring it with fresh oregano, and I'm sure it's better for it. She likes my lentil salad in return, thank goodness. And just when the guests seem to be settling down with their plates, in walks a chilled wheat berry pilaf spiked with jalapeños. Better make room. —K.C.

**Red chili at Rye KC restaurant in Leawood**  
(see [page 74](#) for recipe).







## MARKET DAYS

A childhood spent in a small-town store brings big-time lessons

**A**S A SAN FRANCISCO restaurant critic who gets to evaluate some of the world's best food, I'm often lulled into thinking I've moved away from my Midwestern heritage. Yet my past came flooding back when a waitress at an upscale Berkeley restaurant served me a crock of pimiento cheese spread. One bite and I was back in Chanute, Kansas, standing behind the counter inside the Self Service Supermarket where my father, Gaylord Bauer, opened Bauer's Meat Market in the mid-1940s. I recalled the ruby lipstick of the woman who came each Thursday and flirted with him; the man who would buy a pound of hamburger and eat it raw from the package; my "old maid" English teacher, a friend of my father, who didn't bother to pardon her French in their conversations.

In those days I was the one making pimiento cheese spread. My father reserved the ends of the American cheese he sliced, and I'd grind them along with some just-outdated packaged cheese (probably Kraft), canned pimientos, and mayonnaise. This was the 1960s, when nothing went to waste, and our customers didn't seem to mind.

I've since realized that Dad's pride in his work—using every last scrap of beef in his chili, hand slicing cold cuts, delivering meat to most of the restaurants in our town of 10,000 or so—gave me the foundation for what I do now. People think of Kansas as a culinary wasteland, but the Sunflower State was where I learned culinary devotion.

It's true that there wasn't much ethnic diversity. If we wanted Chinese food, we'd have to drive 40 miles for it. But Chanute did boast what I believe was the only Mexican restaurant in southeast Kansas back then, La Rosa de Oro, and one summer delivering meat, I got to know the cooks and asked them about one of my favorite dishes, chile con queso. They showed me how to make it—the secret was in whipping the ingredients together—and I was able to reproduce it at the store. It soon outsold the pimiento cheese spread.

We ended up eating at La Rosa at least once a week because my father believed that you should patronize those who patronize you. As such, we were out every night. Instead of salmon cornets from the French Laundry, it was more like fried chicken from the Orchid Buffet, but those meals functioned like Ph.D. training for what I do today.

It was a shock when my father retired in 1978. He was only 62 and used to working ten hours a day, six days a week. He wasn't burned out—he was disgusted. The last regional slaughterhouse decided to ship only boxed beef rather than the sides he aged in the cooler. That was the 1970s, when "progress" crushed the small guy and celebrated the corporations. Bigger was always better. He weathered the 1973 retail price freeze imposed by President Nixon, where he lost money on just about everything he sold, but he couldn't abide selling meat that didn't make him proud. So he stopped altogether and offered me the business.

At the time I was a feature writer at the *Kansas City Star*, and I declined. "You're smart," he said. "Never get into the food business. You work long hours and the profits are minuscule."

My father spent the next 25 years of his retirement refinishing furniture, visiting his four children, and doing most of the cooking. Every time I went home he would grill chicken and steaks, and at Christmas he always made fudge, date nut rolls, and other candies. Watching him measure out the flour and pound down the dried fruit, I saw the same man who had meticulously taken care of his meat market. The work ethic was still there.

My mind lingered on these images of him, busy in his store, busy at home, as I finished off that first course in the restaurant in Berkeley. It's been decades since I picked up my last meat cleaver, but given my roots, I continue to appreciate a humble crock of pimiento cheese spread, whether made from artisanal local cheese or from those castaways at my father's store. —Michael Bauer, executive food and wine editor of the San Francisco Chronicle



# Riding High

Back in the 1860s, out of the rising dust of the Old Chisholm Trail, rode America's great folk hero, the cowboy. Popular culture turned him into a paragon of deeply held American values—rugged individualism, fierce independence, and a code of rough justice. We often, however, overlook the cowboy's chief purpose, which is to herd the creatures that provide beef for our tables (though they are known to participate in the occasional rodeo too). While trucks have replaced the need for cross-country cattle drives, cowboys at our Kansas ranches still ensure that those animals make it the ten or so miles from one pasture to the next. Though they also perform less glamorous tasks, like fixing fences and baling hay, the beef still reaches us through the efforts of a cowboy. "Sell the sizzle, not the steak," goes the adage. It's the cowboy—still riding high, though at shorter distances, and with a cellphone instead of a six-gun on his hip—who makes that happen. —*Jim Hoy, director, Center for Great Plains Studies, Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas*







**Clockwise from left: warming up before the rodeo in Hays, Kansas; a stable full of cowboys; an aspiring ranch hand at the Kansas Farm Expo in Topeka; roping a horse at the expo; in a wheat field in Colby.**







Braised rabbit with mushrooms and celery root (see page 73 for recipe).

## WILD AT HEART

Game hunting is a calling in the High Plains of Kansas

**E**VEN DIE-HARD Kansans can lament a journey by car across the western part of the state. Endlessly flat, dry, and mostly treeless, this stretch of Interstate 70 can make drivers feel as if they're standing still, no matter how hard they're pressing the gas. Although I was born and raised in Kansas, the western parts—where the Great Plains become the High Plains, and the rolling landscape flatlines—were as unknown to me as China. The handful of times I did cross through that spec-

tacular lapse was to get to what was on the other side: Colorado.

It remained a mystery even after I moved there. Shortly after college I landed my first real job, as a staff photographer at the *Hays Daily News*. Hays is the population hub of northwest Kansas, with about 20,000 residents, a small college, grain elevators, a Walmart, and—at least as far as I could tell at first—not much else. In the beginning I struggled to make a life outside the newspaper. It was Steven Hausler, then the photo editor, who opened my eyes to the soul of an area that I'd long dismissed. Steve was also a transplant from the other side of Kansas. One day when I was feeling particularly down, he invited me out to grill with his buddies.

This was, I learned, no ordinary cookout. Steven wrote, photographed, and edited the

Outdoors section of the paper, devoted to local hunting and fishing news. At the end of his first year of covering those beats in Hays, he and his new hunting buddies organized a wild game potluck to empty their freezers of what they'd bagged that season and make room for fresh kill. That meal became an annual tradition, and 20 years later, the guys and their families—now fast friends—still gather in a small cabin every autumn to cook.

As I pulled up to the cabin on Cedar Bluff Reservoir, about 40 miles west of Hays, a few guys in boots and ball caps hovered over bacon-wrapped kebabs of pheasant, goose, and duck on portable charcoal and gas grills set up around the patio's periphery, while another deep-fried crappie, walleye, and catfish, pulled from nearby lakes and creeks, in a pan set over a gas range. On a picnic table out on the lawn were braised rabbit and venison sausage—along with sauces made from foraged tart red currants, tannic chokecherries, and morel and oyster mushrooms.

When it was time to eat, I found myself remembering a story Steven had told when I'd first joined the paper. A reader caught up with him at an event and asked how he could stomach hunting the animals he photographed and clearly admired. The dude had a hamburger in his hand at the time. His question was directed at a guy for whom a single unclean kill could haunt him into setting down his bow for an entire season. He answered: "I cherish the animals I harvest. They help sustain me and my family." (And Steven, ever the polite Midwesterner, never brought up the burger.) Here, as Steven's friends cooked what they'd caught with one another, I could see their mutual appreciation for the creatures out in western Kansas. The place that had looked so vacant to me before was now full of meaning.

My drive home was through a changed landscape. Now I knew that the fields that flanked my drive were in fact perfect cover for quail. Ducks and geese would be nesting around the reservoirs. It all held more life than I could have imagined. —*James Roper, a photographer based in Lawrence, Kansas*

### THE GUIDE: KANSAS

**Rye KC** 10551 Mission Road, Leawood (913/642-5800; [ryekc.com](http://ryekc.com)) **Heartland Farm** 1049 CR 390, Pawnee Rock (620/923-4585; [heartlandfarm-ks.org](http://heartlandfarm-ks.org)) **Lawrence Farmers' Market** Between New Hampshire and Rhode Island streets on Ninth Street, Lawrence (785/331-4445; [lawrencefarmersmarket.com](http://lawrencefarmersmarket.com)) ★ For more information on visiting Kansas, go to [travelks.com](http://travelks.com).



the harmony and grandeur  
of poetry sculpted in stone  
ruins of a glorious era  
in russet and gold  
etched against a brilliant blue sky  
magnificent hampi  
vibrant, vivid  
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## Appetizers and Sides

### CREAMED CORN CASSEROLE

SERVES 8

Creamed corn lends a dessert-like lushness to this baked brunch dish (pictured on [page 52](#)) from home cook Christina Rafols of Tonganoxie, Kansas.

- 11 tbsp. unsalted butter, plus more for greasing
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup flour, plus more for dusting
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup yellow cornmeal
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup sugar
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. kosher salt
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 15-oz. can corn kernels, drained,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup liquid reserved
- 1 15-oz. can cream-style corn

Heat oven to 350°. Grease and flour a 7" x 11" baking dish; set aside. Whisk flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a bowl. Melt 8 tbsp. butter in a 1-qt. saucepan and transfer to bowl with eggs, corn kernels and reserved liquid, and cream-style corn; stir until combined. Whisk in dry ingredients and pour into prepared dish. Dot with remaining butter; bake until golden and a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean, about 35 minutes.

### CUCUMBER-PEPPER SLAW, ROPER-STYLE

SERVES 4-6

Kansas-based photographer James Roper tenderizes thinly sliced cucumber with kosher salt in this zesty slaw (pictured on [page 62](#)).

- 1 large cucumber, split lengthwise, seeded, and thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 tbsp. kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup olive oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup rice vinegar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. sugar
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 habanero pepper, seeded and julienned
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and julienned
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and julienned
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 3 oz. feta, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ " pieces (optional)
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup roughly chopped basil

Toss cucumber and salt in a colander set over a bowl; let drain for 15 minutes. Spread cucumber onto paper towels and pat dry. Whisk oil, vinegar, sugar, and pepper in a large bowl. Add cucumbers, peppers, onion, feta, if using, and basil; toss to coat. Let sit for 30 minutes before serving.

### CURRIED POTATO SALAD

SERVES 6-8

Subarna Bhattachan, a Nepalese chef living in Lawrence, Kansas, folds a purée of cool yogurt, nutty tahini, and spicy red chiles into his fragrant take on potato salad (pictured on [page 74](#)).

- 2 lb. Yukon gold potatoes
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup olive oil
- 4 fresh small red Thai chiles, roughly chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup plain Greek yogurt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup tahini
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp. curry powder
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup roughly chopped cilantro
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced

1 Boil the potatoes in a 6-qt. saucepan of salted water until tender, about 45 minutes; drain and

chill. Peel and roughly chop the potatoes; place in a large bowl and set aside.

2 Heat oil in a 10" skillet over medium-high heat. Add chiles and cook until golden, about 1 minute; let cool. Transfer oil and chiles to a blender with the yogurt, tahini, curry powder, zest, juice, salt, and pepper; purée until smooth. Pour dressing over potatoes and stir in half each of the cilantro and scallions. Garnish with remaining cilantro and scallions.

### FARMER'S SALAD WITH BEET VINAIGRETTE

SERVES 8-10

A thick sweet-tart pickled beet dressing brightens this salad (pictured on [page 74](#)) from Lawrence, Kansas, home cook Dana Hangauer. Pour it on top of any combination of fresh, boiled, or pickled vegetables, or use it as a dip for crudités.

- 1 pint cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup red wine vinegar
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. fingerling or small waxy potatoes
- 3 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 4 slices whole grain bread, cut into 1" pieces
- 1 small white onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup pickled beets from a jar, drained
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp. whole grain mustard
- 1 tbsp. honey
- 1 small shallot, roughly chopped
- 8 oz. mixed greens
- 1 cup pickled red cabbage from a jar, drained
- 4 eggs, hard-boiled, peeled, and quartered
- 2 tbsp. roughly chopped basil
- 1 tbsp. roughly chopped mint
- 1 tbsp. roughly chopped parsley

1 Toss tomatoes,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup vinegar, 2 tbsp. olive oil, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Boil potatoes in salted water until tender, 6-8 minutes. Drain and thinly slice.

2 Heat  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup oil and garlic in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Cook until soft, about 1 minute. Add bread, salt, and pepper; cook until crisp, 7-9 minutes. Transfer croutons to a plate.

3 Wipe skillet clean and heat  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup oil over medium heat. Add onion; cook until slightly caramelized, 5-7 minutes. Add sliced potatoes, salt, and pepper; cook until potatoes are golden, 10-12 minutes.

4 Purée remaining vinegar with beets, mustard, honey, shallot, salt, pepper, and 3 tbsp. water in a blender until smooth. With the motor running, drizzle in remaining oil; purée until emulsified.

5 To serve, spread mixed greens on a large platter. Arrange tomatoes, potatoes, croutons, cabbage, and eggs in alternating rows over greens. Drizzle about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup dressing over the top and sprinkle with basil, mint, and parsley. Serve additional dressing on the side.

### FRESH PEA AND CORN SALAD

SERVES 6-8

Shelled peas and fresh corn are transformed into a sweet and sour tossed salad (pictured on [page 74](#)).

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup apple cider vinegar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup canola oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 cups fresh peas
- 3 ears corn, husks and silks discarded, kernels sliced from cobs and reserved

- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 4-oz. jar diced pimientos, drained

Whisk vinegar, sugar, oil, salt, and pepper in a large bowl; set aside. Bring a 2-qt. saucepan of salted water to a boil. Add peas and cook until bright green and tender, 1-2 minutes. Transfer peas to a bowl of ice water until chilled. Drain and add to bowl along with remaining ingredients; toss to combine. Let sit for 30 minutes before serving.

### GREEN BEAN AND PEACH SALAD

SERVES 6-8

Summer peaches pair remarkably well with sweet caramelized onions and crisp green beans in this salad (pictured at bottom left on [page 62](#)) from Deb Miller of Lawrence, Kansas.

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1 lb. firm-ripe yellow peaches, sliced
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped oregano
- 2 tbsp. white balsamic vinegar
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 lb. green beans, trimmed

1 Heat 3 tbsp. oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion; cook until slightly caramelized, 7-10 minutes. Stir in peaches and oregano; cook until peaches are soft, 5-7 minutes. Whisk remaining oil with vinegar, salt, and pepper in a large bowl; add onion and peaches and set aside.

2 Bring a 6-qt. saucepan of salted water to a boil; add beans and cook until crisp-tender, 1-2 minutes. Transfer to a bowl of ice water until chilled. Drain and add to peach mixture; toss to combine.

### JUDE'S PERFECT POTATO SALAD

SERVES 8

A healthy dose of celery seeds and sharp Dijon mustard add a kick to this mashed potato and egg salad (pictured at bottom right on [page 62](#)) from Kansas home cook Judy Swartz.

- 2 lb. russet potatoes
- 1 tbsp. celery seeds
- 5 eggs, hard-boiled, peeled, and roughly chopped
- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 cups mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp. Dijon mustard

Boil potatoes in a 4-qt. saucepan of salted water; drain and chill. Peel and roughly chop potatoes; place in a large bowl. Add celery seeds, eggs, celery, onion, salt, and pepper. Using a potato masher, gently mash potatoes. Stir in mayonnaise and mustard.

### LENTIL AND BEET SALAD WITH LAVENDER-MUSTARD VINAIGRETTE

SERVES 6-8

A honey-sweetened dressing of orange juice infused with lavender lends floral notes to this lentil salad (pictured on [page 62](#)) from author Kerri Conan.

- 1 lb. medium beets, scrubbed clean
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 cups French le Puy lentils (see [page 108](#)) or



- green lentils
- 5 bay leaves
- 1 tsp. mustard seeds
- 2 cups fresh orange juice
- 1 tsp. dried lavender
- 2 tbsp. honey
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced

1 Heat oven to 400°. Rub beets with 3 tbsp. olive oil, salt, and pepper in an 8"-square baking dish and cover with foil; cook until tender, 1-1 1/2 hours. Let cool, then peel beets and finely chop; set aside.

2 Bring lentils, bay leaves, and 4 cups of water to a boil in a 4-qt. saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, covered, until tender but not mushy, about 30 minutes. Drain, discarding liquid and bay leaves.

3 Toast mustard seeds in a 10" skillet over medium-high heat until they begin to pop, 1-2 minutes. Add juice; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and add lavender; cook until juice is reduced to about 1/2 cup, 30-35 minutes. Strain into a large bowl, discarding lavender and seeds. Whisk in honey and remaining oil. Add beets, lentils, red onion, salt, and pepper; toss to combine.

#### SUMMER SUCCOTASH SALAD

**SERVES 6-8**

Grilled sweet corn, plus edamame in place of the traditional limas, elevate this summer mainstay (pictured on [page 62](#)) from Neal Ballard of Lawrence, Kansas.

- 8 ears corn in husks
- 1 large Vidalia onion, cut crosswise 1/2" thick
- 2 cups frozen shelled edamame
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

- 1 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup white wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup roughly chopped tarragon
- 2 pints cherry or grape tomatoes, halved

1 Pull husks back from corn but don't remove; discard silks and replace husks. Soak in cold water 30 minutes; drain. Heat a charcoal grill or set a gas grill to medium-high. Grill corn, turning as needed, until husks are slightly charred and kernels are tender, 5-10 minutes; let cool, discard husks and slice kernels off cobs into a large bowl. Grill the onion, flipping once, until slightly charred and tender, 3-5 minutes. Roughly chop; add to the bowl with corn.

2 Boil edamame in a 2-qt. saucepan of salted water until tender, 2-3 minutes. Transfer edamame to a bowl of ice water until chilled. Drain and add to the bowl with corn along with oil, vinegar, tarragon, tomatoes, salt, and pepper; toss to combine.

#### SWEET POTATO SALAD WITH TOMATOES AND GINGER

**SERVES 6-8**

Roasted sweet potatoes are married with candied ginger in a citrus vinaigrette in this salad recipe (pictured on [page 62](#)) from Kansas home cook Sue Ashline.

- 2 1/2 lb. sweet potatoes, scrubbed clean
- 3/4 cup olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup finely chopped parsley
- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 1/4 cup fresh orange juice
- 3 tbsp. maple syrup
- 1/3 cup candied ginger, finely chopped (see [page 108](#))

- 3 roma tomatoes, cored and cut into 1" pieces

Heat oven to 400°. Place sweet potatoes on a baking sheet and prick all over with the tines of a fork. Rub each potato with about 1 tbsp. olive oil and season with salt; bake until tender, about 1 hour. Let cool, then peel and roughly chop. Whisk remaining oil with parsley, juices, syrup, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Add potatoes, ginger, and tomatoes; toss to combine.

## Main Dishes

### BRAISED RABBIT WITH MUSHROOMS AND CELERY ROOT

**SERVES 4-6**

Wild rabbit, a favorite among hunters in Kansas, is braised in beer and chicken stock to make this autumnal dish (pictured on [page 70](#)).

- 3 slices bacon, roughly chopped
- 1 3-lb. rabbit, cut into 5 pieces (see [page 108](#))
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 cup flour
- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- 7 oz. oyster mushrooms, trimmed
- 4 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 small yellow onions, peeled and quartered
- 2 stalks celery, cut into 1" pieces
- 1 medium carrot, cut into 1" pieces
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 1/2 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 cup lager-style beer
- 1/2 medium celery root (about 3/4-1 lb.), peeled and cut into 1" pieces

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Clockwise from top left: fresh pea and corn salad; curried potato salad; farmer's salad with beet vinaigrette (see page 72 for recipes); iced sugar cookies (see page 76 for recipe).

- 2 tbsp. chopped parsley, for garnish
- Corn on the cob, for serving (optional)

Heat bacon in a 6-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat; cook until fat is rendered and bacon is crisp, about 10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer bacon to a bowl. Season rabbit with salt and pepper, and dredge in flour, shaking off excess. Working in batches, cook rabbit, flipping once, until browned, about 10 minutes; transfer to a plate. Add oil and mushrooms; cook until browned, 4–5 minutes; transfer to the plate with rabbit. Add garlic, onion, celery, and carrot to pan; cook, stirring occasionally until garlic is browned, about 3–4 minutes. Add bay leaf and tomato paste; cook, stirring, until slightly caramelized, about 3 minutes. Add stock and beer; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and return rabbit and mushrooms to the pan. Stir in celery root; cover slightly and braise until rabbit is cooked through, 35–40 minutes. Garnish with parsley and reserved bacon; serve with corn on the cob, if you like.

## ★ CHICKEN-FRIED STEAK WITH SAUSAGE GRAVY

**SERVES 4**

Inexpensive cube steaks, tenderized by the butcher, work best for this heartland breakfast staple (pictured on page 76).

- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste

- ½ tsp. onion powder
- ¼ tsp. cayenne
- ⅛ tsp. dried oregano
- ⅛ tsp. ground cumin
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1 cup, plus 3 tbsp. flour
- 1 cup canola oil
- 4 8-oz. cube steaks (about ¼" thick)
- 2 oz. pork breakfast sausage (see page 108)
- 2 cups milk
- Hot sauce, to taste
- Fried eggs, skillet-fried potatoes, and buttermilk biscuits, for serving (optional)

**1** Whisk buttermilk, black pepper, onion powder, cayenne, oregano, cumin, eggs, and salt in a bowl. Place 1 cup flour in a shallow bowl.

**2** Heat oven to 200°. Heat oil in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, dip steaks in buttermilk mixture and then coat in flour, shaking off excess. Fry, flipping once, until golden and cooked through, 5–7 minutes. Transfer steaks to a baking sheet fitted with a rack and place in oven to keep warm.

**3** Heat a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add sausage; cook, stirring and breaking up meat into very small pieces, until browned, 3–5 minutes. Sprinkle in 3 tbsp. flour; cook 1 minute. Whisk in milk and bring to a boil; cook until gravy is slightly thick, about 2 minutes. Season with salt, pepper, and hot sauce.

**4** To serve, divide steaks among plates; ladle with gravy. Serve with eggs, potatoes, and biscuits, if you like.

## ★ EXTRA-CRISPY FRIED CHICKEN

**SERVES 4**

Double-fried chicken marinated in an aromatic brine (pictured on page 56) is a specialty of the house at the restaurant Rye KC in Leawood, Kansas.

- ¼ cup kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 2 tbsp. coarsely ground black pepper, plus more to taste
- 2 tbsp. honey
- 2 tbsp. sugar
- 15 whole cloves
- 6 sprigs parsley
- 6 sprigs thyme
- 4 bay leaves
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 1 3½–4-lb. chicken, quartered
- 4 cups flour
- 2 tbsp. granulated garlic
- 1½ tbsp. cayenne
- 1½ tbsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- Canola oil, for frying
- Baked beans and sautéed green beans, for serving (optional)

**1** Boil ¼ cup salt and 1 tbsp. pepper with the honey, sugar, cloves, parsley, thyme, bay leaves, zest, and juice, plus 6 cups of water in a 4-qt. saucepan until salt is dissolved, 5–7 minutes. Remove brine from heat and let cool completely. Add chicken and cover; refrigerate overnight.

**2** The next day, drain chicken, rinse, and pat dry with paper towels. Whisk 2 cups flour, half each of the granulated garlic, cayenne, onion powder, and paprika with salt and pepper in a bowl. In another bowl, whisk remaining flour, granulated garlic, cayenne, onion powder, and paprika with baking powder, salt, pepper, and 2 cups water into a smooth batter.

**3** Pour enough oil into a 6-qt. Dutch oven to reach a depth of 2". Heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 300°. Working in batches, dredge chicken in flour mixture, shaking off excess, dip in batter, and dredge again in flour. Fry, flipping once, until golden and almost cooked through, 7–8 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh reads 150°. Transfer chicken to paper towels.

**4** Increase oil to 350° and fry chicken until crisp, 2–3 minutes more; drain on paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Serve with baked beans and sautéed green beans, if you like.

## RYE'S RED CHILI

**SERVES 8–10**

Pulled pork stands in for the burnt ends of barbecued brisket in this robust Kansas City-style bean chili (pictured on page 66) inspired by one from the restaurant Rye KC in Leawood, Kansas.

- 1 lb. boneless pork shoulder
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ⅓ cup light brown sugar
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 2 12-oz. bottles pale ale-style beer
- 6 oz. sliced bacon, finely chopped
- 10 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 large Vidalia onion, finely chopped





Lemon curd layer cake with white chocolate buttercream at Rye KC in Leawood, Kansas (see page 76 for recipe).

TODD COLEMAN: FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JAMES ROPER; JAMES OSELAND (2); JAMES ROPER



- 1 large red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 3 tbsp. dark red chile powder
- 1/2 tbsp. Aleppo pepper
- 1 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 2 28-oz. cans whole peeled tomatoes, crushed
- 2 15.5-oz. cans dark red kidney beans, drained
- 2 tbsp. hot sauce
- 2 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- Sliced scallions, for garnish
- Cornbread, for serving (optional)

1 Heat oven to 500°. Place pork in a 9"x 13" baking dish and season with salt and pepper. Rub with brown sugar, garlic powder, and cumin. Bake until browned, 30–35 minutes. Reduce heat to 300°. Add 1 bottle of beer and cover tightly with aluminum foil; bake until pork is very tender, about 2 hours. Let meat rest for 20 minutes, then shred.

2 Heat bacon in an 8-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook until fat is rendered, 8–10 minutes. Add garlic, jalapeño, onion, and bell pepper; cook until soft, 10–12 minutes. Add tomato paste, chile powder, Aleppo pepper, chile flakes, and bay leaves; cook until lightly caramelized, about 3 minutes. Add remaining bottle of beer, plus stock, tomatoes, and beans; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, covered slightly, until beans are very tender and chili is slightly thick, 1 1/2–2 hours. Stir in shredded pork, plus hot sauce and Worcestershire. Garnish with scallions and crumble cornbread over top, if you like.

## TOMATO-CHEDDAR TART

**SERVES 6–8**

Salting and draining fresh tomatoes before baking ensures a crisp, flaky crust in this savory tart recipe (pictured on page 59) from the Dominican sisters of Heartland Farm in Pawnee Rock, Kansas.

- 2 cups flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 10 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed and chilled
- 1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
- 1/3 cup ice-cold water
- 3 medium vine-ripe tomatoes, cored and sliced 1/4" thick
- 1/3 cup grated pecorino cheese
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped basil

1 Make the crust: Pulse flour, 1/2 cup cheddar, butter, 1 1/2 tsp. salt, and 1/2 tsp. pepper in a food processor into pea-size crumbles. Add water; pulse until dough comes together. Form dough into a flat disk and wrap in plastic wrap; chill 1 hour.

2 Spread tomatoes in a single layer on a double thickness of paper towels. Sprinkle with salt and let drain for 1 hour. Blot dry with more paper towels.

3 Heat oven to 425°. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 14" circle about 1/8" thick. Transfer to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Mix 3/4 cup cheddar, 1/4 cup pecorino, mayonnaise, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Spread mayonnaise mixture evenly over crust, leaving a 1 1/2" border. Top with tomato slices, overlapping slightly. Season with black pepper, and sprinkle with scallions and basil. Fold overhanging crust up and over edge of filling. Sprinkle remaining cheese evenly over top of filling and crust. Bake until golden brown, 40–45 minutes.



**Chicken-fried steak with sausage gravy served with eggs, potatoes, and a biscuit (see page 74 for recipe).**

## Desserts

### ICED SUGAR COOKIES

**MAKES ABOUT 2 1/2 DOZEN**

The dough for these buttery iced cookies (pictured on page 74) is delicate; if it becomes too soft, work with a smaller portion of dough at a time.

- 3 cups flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 12 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
- 3 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 4 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1/3 cup milk
- 3–6 drops yellow food coloring
- 3–6 drops red food coloring

1 Whisk flour, baking soda, and salt in a bowl. Using an electric hand mixer, beat butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl until fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add 1 tsp. vanilla. Slowly beat in dry ingredients until a soft dough forms. Divide dough in half and shape each piece into a flat disk. Wrap disks in plastic wrap; chill 1 hour.

2 Heat oven to 325°. On a lightly floured surface, and working with 1 disk of dough at a time, roll dough 1/8" thick. Using a flower-shaped or other cookie cutter, cut dough and place on baking sheets lined with parchment paper, spacing cookies 2" apart. Reroll and cut scraps. Bake until golden, 10–12 minutes. Transfer cookies to a wire rack; let cool completely.

3 Whisk remaining vanilla with confectioners' sugar and milk in a bowl until smooth. Transfer about 1/4 cup icing to another bowl. Stir yellow food coloring into the larger amount and red coloring into the smaller amount, making a pale pink icing. Spread a layer of yellow icing over cookies and place a dot of pink icing in the center of each; let icing set before serving.

### LEMON CURD LAYER CAKE WITH WHITE CHOCOLATE BUTTERCREAM

**SERVES 8–10**

Silken white chocolate buttercream frosts a tender yellow cake layered with rich lemon curd (pictured on page 75) in this recipe from the restaurant Rye KC in Leawood, Kansas.

For the cake:

- 16 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened, plus more for pans
- 2 1/2 cups cake flour, sifted, plus more for pans
- 2 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 tbsp. lemon zest, plus 2 tbsp. juice
- 4 eggs

For the curd:

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 tbsp. lemon zest, plus 1/3 cup juice
- 3 eggs
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed and chilled

For the buttercream and garnish:

- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3 egg whites
- 20 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened, plus 4 tbsp., melted
- 2 oz. white chocolate, melted and cooled
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/8 tsp. kosher salt
- 3/4 cup finely ground graham crackers
- Candied lemon slices, to garnish (optional)

1 Make the cake: Heat oven to 350°. Butter and flour two 9" round cake pans and set aside. Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt in a bowl; set aside. Whisk milk and vanilla in a bowl; set aside. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle, cream butter, sugar, zest, and juice on medium-high speed until fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. On low speed, alternately add dry ingredients in 3 batches and wet ingredients in 2 batches. Increase speed to high and beat until batter is smooth, about 5 seconds. Divide batter between prepared pans, and smooth tops with a rubber spatula; drop pans lightly on a counter to expel any large air bubbles. Bake until a toothpick inserted in middle comes out clean, 25–30 minutes. Let cakes cool for 20 minutes in pans; invert onto wire racks, and let cool to room temperature. Using a serrated knife, halve each cake horizontally to produce four layers.

2 Make the curd: Whisk sugar, zest, juice, and eggs in a 4-qt. saucepan until smooth. Place saucepan over medium heat; cook, stirring, until mixture thickens to the consistency of loose pudding, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and slowly whisk in butter until melted and smooth. Pour curd through a fine-mesh strainer into a bowl and chill until ready to use.

3 Make the buttercream: Place sugar and egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer and set it over a saucepan of simmering water; stir mixture until egg whites register 140° on an instant-read thermometer. Remove bowl from saucepan and place on stand mixer fitted with a whisk; beat on high speed until meringue is cooled and stiff peaks form. Replace whisk with paddle and add softened butter to meringue; beat until smooth. Stir in white chocolate, vanilla, and salt.

4 To assemble, place one cake layer on a cake stand and spread with 1/3 cup curd; repeat with remaining layers and curd, ending with a cake layer. Cover top and sides with 3/4 of the buttercream. Place remaining buttercream in a pastry bag fitted with a plain 1/2" tip; pipe 1" mounds along the top edge of cake. Mix graham crackers and 4 tbsp. melted butter in a bowl and sprinkle along bottom edge of cake. Garnish the top of the cake with candied lemon slices, if you like, and chill cake to firm frosting. Serve at room temperature.





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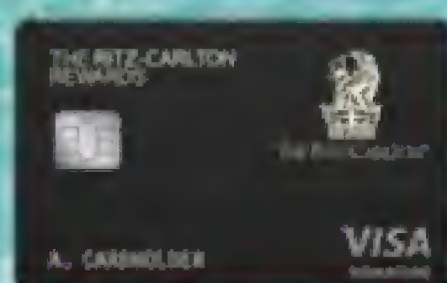


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**Stephanie Izard**

Girl & the Goat, Little Goat,  
Chicago, IL,  
2013 James Beard Foundation  
Best Chef, Great Lakes





We Oklahomans are not minimalists. Our battle cry could be “Shoot when you see the whites of their plates.” I grew up here, on huge pots of pinto beans, mounds of sweet squash and crispy okra, hunks of watermelon, and platters of cornmeal-fried catfish. The land is swept by tornadoes and steeped in borrowed traditions. We are a crazy quilt of people—we take food from elsewhere and make it our own. Settlers of all stripes sprinted across the state border in land runs to build homes out of prairie sod. Coal lured miners from Italy to the hills in the southeast; their old mining towns still serve fried chicken with a side of spaghetti, while in the west, Germans sowed hard wheat and endured drought. Cowboys drove cattle from Texas to Kansas through Oklahoma, and the Trail of Tears brought all the tribes of the Southeast to Oklahoma, along with their farming and foraging. In the century since statehood, the cow towns of Tulsa and Oklahoma City have struck oil and sprouted skyscrapers and fancy restaurants. But underneath it all, Oklahoma is still an agricultural center, staggering in its diversity and plenty. —Mark Brown, author of *My Mother Is a Chicken* (This Land Press, 2012)

# OKLAH







Clockwise from left: smoked tomato soup at Ludivine in Oklahoma City (see page 90 for recipe); cattle at Drummond Ranch near Hominy; the Oklahoma City skyline; a sloganeering pie at the Drummond family ranch party.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: JAMES ROPER (2); WALTER BIBIKOW/THE IMAGE BANK/GETTY IMAGES; JAMES ROPER





## Oklahoma Rising

At first glance, Oklahoma City's Ludivine appears to serve the type of familiar rib-sticking French bistro fare that sends diners all over America into food-induced comas: split beef bones with molten marrow and tomato jam; a croque tartine, a monster of a sandwich heavy with ham, béchamel sauce, and bubbling cheese, topped with a fried egg. But the side salad for that croque is made with foraged dock and chickweed, which lend a refreshing bittersweet crunch. It's just one hint that this place is more complex than you might think. Jonathon Stranger and Russ Parsons, the young chefs and co-owners of Ludivine, are both Oklahoma City natives who left home to work under top chefs like Jean-Georges Vongerichten and David Burke. Pulled back by a desire to engage with the agricultural heritage of

their hometown, they returned and opened this restaurant in 2010. Their cooking showcases Oklahoma sourcing at its best, from farm-raised Mangalitsa pork and bison to the same native plants that sustained the Choctaw tribe, the area's first settlers. (The chefs consulted Choctaw experts in medicinal and edible plants during the restaurant's development.) The resulting menu might feature warm cocottes of sausage-Camembert spoon pudding topped with a dollop of melting crème fraîche, a juicy bone-in pork chop with charred wild greens, a bowl of smoked tomato soup with a baguette slice slathered with a pungent pesto of butter and wild garlic, or bison tartare over lobster mushrooms and sweet corn. It's a celebration of Oklahoma like none we've ever tasted. —Karen Shimizu





Cocottes of sausage-Camembert spoon pudding at Ludivine (see page 91 for recipe). Facing page: Ian Bennett, sommelier at Ludivine.



# BIG PIE COUNTRY

Dessert steals the show at an Oklahoma rancher's annual picnic

**A**S A YOUNG GIRL living in the suburbs of Los Angeles, I was an avid *Little House on the Prairie* fan. So perhaps it was inevitable I would marry a farm boy. Well, okay, a rancher—but close enough for me. My husband, Gentner Drummond, is the great-great-grandson of Frederick Drummond, who came to Oklahoma from Scotland in the 1880s. Family legend has it that he might have been escaping a conviction for murdering a competitor on the golf course—a story never verified but one we like to tell nonetheless. In 1911, Frederick's oldest son, R.C., started what would become a cattle dynasty on the ranch where Gentner and I—with the help of our ranch hands and children—now run a few thousand head on more than 20,000 acres of land.

Not long after I first got to know Gentner's family, I started hearing about a massive picnic hosted at the ranch by the men's club of the local Presbyterian church. From the 1950s through the 1970s, they invited fathers and sons from across the state to enjoy a day on a working cattle ranch and eat barbecued Drummond beef while surrounded by grassland as far as the eye could see. The people who told me about the picnic were not members of the Drummond family themselves but the little boys—now grown men—who had attended with their fathers, and for whom the event had made a lifetime impression. The longing I heard in their voices made me decide to rekindle the tradition. My idea was to invite all of our friends to the ranch for a potluck. I also figured—rather naively, it turns out—that we could host a friendly old-fashioned pie contest to boot. The first-place prize would be a hand-painted trophy. It would be fun.

What I quickly learned is that there is no such thing as a “friendly” pie-baking contest around here. Those who bake, bake to win. The first year of the revived picnic, pie after pie arrived, filling tables to the point where they could accommodate nothing else. People from all walks of life—a waitress from the local diner, the CEO of an oil and gas company (who won the grand prize that year)—bent the ears of the judges for hours with impassioned stories of their pie-baking odysseys. Others tried to leverage favor for their entries



with blatant flattery, heck, even bribery. And keeping the hungry hordes away from the pies was a challenge worthy of the Department of Homeland Security. By the time the judging started, several slices had already vanished.

As our guests have multiplied over the years, the potluck scenario has gone by the wayside. Now more than ever, everyone is focused on one thing and one thing only: baking the winning pie. Peeking into the tent just before the judging began this year, I was dazzled by over 70 entries of all different kinds: apple pies fancied up with caramel (continued on [page 88](#))

**Clockwise from top left:** Boot-clad guests wait for dinner at the Drummond Ranch party; author Wendy Drummond prepares cowboy caviar (see [page 90](#) for recipe); Drummond Ranch foreman Justin Taylor, who manages the ranch's 2,000-plus head of cattle.





JAMES ROPER (3)





Clockwise from top left: razzleberry pie, blue-ribbon pecan pie, plum pie, caramel-apple pie, boysenberry pie, apple-rosemary lattice pie, Nelson pear pie. Recipes start on page 91.

JAMES ROPER





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Howard Hitt (right) talks with a customer at his Sickles farm during the watermelon harvest.

(continued from page 84) or rosemary, silken pear and custard, mixed-fruit “razzleberry” pie, and more.

To keep the crowd at bay while the judges, two chefs from Tulsa and a food magazine editor from New York, methodically tasted each competing pie, we served burgers, mac and cheese, and “cowboy caviar,” a salad of hominy and black-eyed peas. But as soon as they’d satiated themselves, our guests migrated back to watch the pie contest, awaiting the moment when they could all dig in. When the judges reached the entry that would win the grand-prize trophy—a bronzed pecan pie with a buttery crust and a luscious filling topped with perfectly arranged nuts, from former restaurant owner Rubyane Surritte—we could all tell. The judges’ eyebrows lifted, and they all looked up from their plates at each other with expressions of surprise and satisfaction. Then it was time to serve the pies. In a blink of an eye, plates were full and contentment washed through the tent.

A few days after our guests went home, we excitedly began to plan next year’s picnic. Sometimes our neighbors ask why hundreds of city folk drive an hour or more to spend an afternoon in the country. My husband thinks it’s the cattle and the long views. Me? I know it’s the pie. —Wendy Drummond, Hominy, Oklahoma-based rancher-in-training and lawyer

## MELON MAN

A woman and her grandfather bond over a harvest

**M**Y GRANDFATHER, Howard Hitt, has a farm in Sickles, Oklahoma, west of Oklahoma City. While it’s primarily a peanut farm, come summertime it transitions over to cantaloupe and watermelons, which grow beautifully in Oklahoma’s sandy loam soil. When I was a kid, my family would visit for a week each summer from where we lived in Fayetteville, Arkansas. My two brothers and I spent the days running around the farm. At the end of each hot afternoon, we’d help ourselves to watermelon: enormous Jubilees; crisp, sweet Starbrites; deep teal Black Diamonds; yellow-fleshed Desert Kings; you name it.

Though my grandfather would slip me a twenty sometimes, and we exchanged a few words here and there, I never got to know him very well back then. So last August I decided to go to Sickles and photograph my grandfather, now 86 years old, during his watermelon harvest.

As a professional photographer, I’ve shot

all kinds of subjects, but this experience was personal—and eye-opening. Over the course of four days studying Grandpa through the lens of my camera, I saw a side of him that I’d never noticed as a kid. Starting at six every morning, his days were full: He’d help load hundreds of melons for customers even if they were half his age; he’d go into the field himself and pick melons if someone needed a few more to make their orders, carefully checking each fruit to make sure it was perfectly ripe. The chores never ended, but he didn’t seem to mind. And I noticed that whenever this characteristically quiet man spoke, people listened—so I listened, too. I started to understand what it meant to be a farmer, and what kind of man my grandfather was.

After I left, I called and asked him how he knows when each melon is ripe for picking. He told me, “You’ll have to come back and learn where you can.” I smiled. I know now I’ll be going back next year, and the year after that, as long as there are watermelons and Grandpa is harvesting them. —Shannon Sturgis, New York City-based photographer

### THE GUIDE: OKLAHOMA

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## Appetizers and Sides

### COWBOY CAVIAR

(Black-Eyed Pea and Hominy Salad)

SERVES 6-8

A lime juice and spicy Sriracha marinade gives this summer side dish (pictured on [page 85](#)) a zesty kick.

- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 tbsp. Sriracha hot sauce
- 1 1/2 tbsp. honey
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 3 plum tomatoes, cored and finely chopped
- 2 jalapeño peppers, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1 small red onion, finely chopped
- 2 15.5-oz. cans black-eyed peas, drained
- 1 15.5-oz. can golden hominy (see [page 108](#)), drained
- 1/3 cup finely chopped cilantro, leaves and stems

Whisk lime juice, oil, Sriracha, honey, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Add garlic, tomatoes, peppers, onion, peas, and hominy; toss to combine. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 2 hours or up to overnight. Stir in cilantro before serving.

### SMOKED TOMATO SOUP

SERVES 6-8

This thick, tangy soup from Ludivine restaurant in Oklahoma City (pictured on [page 81](#)) gets additional depth of flavor from smoked tomatoes.

- 2 tbsp. mesquite wood chips for an indoor smoker (see [page 108](#))
- 3 lb. ripe plum tomatoes, cored and halved
- 1/3 cup olive oil

## 3 GREAT HEARTLAND COOKBOOKS

As we cooked through pamphlets, cookbooks, and even home recipe cards for this issue, a few resources rose to the surface as our essential guides to the heartland kitchen. The **Prairie Farmer-WLS Cook Book** (*The Prairie Press*, 1941) contains recipes from issues of *Prairie Farmer Magazine*, printed between 1841 and 1941, and from the magazine's 20th-century radio station, WLS, which broadcast cooking tips to homesteaders. The book, a historic artifact in its own right, inspires with frontier recipes for vinegar pie and fried cucumber, which delivers on its promise to be "one of the most delicious dishes you can imagine." **At Willa Cather's Tables** (*Allen Press*, 2011) gathers recipes from the family and friends of the region's most celebrated writer, in addition to providing

recipes for the foods that wend their way through her early 20th-century novels. Like Cather's writing, these recipes draw from the immigrants who made the heartland home. Sweets like Czech poppyseed tortes and *ostkaka*, a Swedish ricotta cake, had us reaching for both our aprons and Cather's seminal novel *O Pioneers!* **Prairie Home Cooking** (*The Harvard Common Press*, 1999) by heartland cookbook icon Judith Fertig is a tour de force of the region's layered foodways, providing historic context and personal anecdotes along with each of her 400 recipes for down-home dishes like summer peach jam, prize-winning barbecued ribs, and Exoduster stew—a one-pot meal of sausage, smoked turkey, and green beans brought by emancipated slaves. —*Felicia Campbell*

- 10 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup dry red wine
- 2 cups chicken stock
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup roughly chopped sage
- 1/4 cup roughly chopped tarragon
- 2 tbsp. sherry vinegar
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 12 oz. baguette, thinly sliced on the bias
- Microflowers, for garnish (optional; see [page 108](#))
- Crème fraîche, for garnish

**1** Prepare a stovetop smoker: Place wood chips in a small pile in center on bottom of smoker. Place drip tray and rack on top of wood chips. Arrange tomatoes on rack, cut side down, and slide on lid. Place smoker on a stovetop burner over medium heat. When smoke appears, let tomatoes smoke about 7 minutes. Turn off heat; let sit, covered, 10 minutes more.

**2** Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add half the garlic plus the onion; cook until soft, 5-7 minutes. Add wine; bring to a boil. Cook, until reduced by half, 5-7 minutes. Add tomatoes, stock, salt, and pepper; return to a boil. Reduce heat to medium, cook until tomatoes break down and soup is slightly thick, 45-60 minutes. Stir in sage, tarragon, and vinegar. Working in batches, purée soup in a blender. Return to saucepan; keep warm.

**3** Heat oven to 350°. Mix remaining garlic with butter, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Place baguette slices in one layer on a baking sheet; cook until lightly toasted, 8-10 minutes. Spread garlic butter on slices. Sprinkle with microflowers, if you like.

**4** To serve, ladle soup into serving bowls; garnish with a swirl of crème fraîche. Serve buttered baguette slices on the side.







**Croque tartine Parisienne at Oklahoma City's Ludivine (see recipe below).**

## Main Dishes

### ❖ CROQUE TARTINE PARISIENNE

(Egg-Topped Ham and Cheese Sandwich)

**SERVES 4**

A fried egg crowns this decadent sandwich of ham enrobed in béchamel and melted cheese (pictured above) from Oklahoma City's Ludivine restaurant.

- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 4 tbsp. flour
- 1 cup milk
- 5 1/2 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1/4 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 8 1/4"-thick slices country bread, lightly toasted
- 8 oz. thinly sliced smoked ham
- 16 oz. Gruyère cheese
- 4 eggs
- Crème fraîche, for garnish
- Aleppo pepper, for garnish
- Mixed green salad, for serving (optional)

**1** Melt 4 tbsp. butter in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Whisk in flour; cook 2 minutes. Whisk in milk; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook until slightly thick, making a béchamel sauce, 6–8 minutes. Whisk in 1 1/2 tbsp. mustard, plus nutmeg, salt, and pepper; set sauce aside.

**2** Heat broiler to high. Place 4 slices bread on a baking sheet and spread 1 tbsp. mustard over each. Top each with 2 oz. ham, 2 tbsp. béchamel sauce, and 2 oz. cheese. Broil until cheese begins to melt, 1–2 minutes. Top with remaining bread slices and spread with remaining sauce; sprinkle with remaining cheese. Broil until cheese is browned and bubbly, 3–4 minutes.

**3** Meanwhile, melt remaining butter in a 12" non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add eggs and season with salt and pepper; cook until whites are cooked but yolks are still runny, about 3 minutes. Place an egg on top of each sandwich, garnish with a dollop of crème fraîche, and sprinkle with Aleppo pepper. Serve with salad on the side, if you like.

### SAUSAGE-CAMEMBERT SPOON PUDDING

**SERVES 8**

Italian sausage and creamy Camembert cheese transform simple cornmeal spoon pudding into a rich side dish (pictured on [page 83](#)) in this recipe from Ludivine restaurant in Oklahoma City.

- 3 tbsp. olive oil, plus more for greasing
- 8 oz. raw spicy Italian sausage, casings removed
- 3 egg whites
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup cornmeal
- 6 oz. Camembert or Brie cheese with the rind, cut into 1/4" pieces
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Crème fraîche, for garnish
- Aleppo pepper, for garnish
- Finely chopped parsley, for garnish

**1** Heat oil in a 10" skillet over medium-high heat. Add sausage; cook, stirring and breaking up meat into large pieces, until browned, 5–7 minutes; set aside. Using a hand mixer, beat egg whites in a bowl until soft peaks form, 2–3 minutes; refrigerate until ready to use.

**2** Heat oven to 350°. Grease eight 4-oz. ramekins with olive oil. Boil stock and cream in a 4-qt. saucepan. Whisk in cornmeal; cook until slightly thick, 1–2 minutes. Stir in sausage, salt, and pepper; fold in egg whites and cheese. Spoon into ramekins; bake until set, 30–35 minutes. Garnish with crème fraîche; sprinkle with Aleppo pepper and parsley.

## Desserts and Drinks

### APPLE-ROSEMARY LATTICE PIE

**SERVES 8**

A rosemary-laced cornmeal crust gives this lattice-topped apple pie (pictured on [page 86](#)) from Drummond Ranch pie contestant Annette Rosenheck a fragrant, savory dimension.

For the crust:

- 2 cups flour, plus more for dusting
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 tbsp. cornmeal
- 1/2 tbsp. finely chopped rosemary
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 12 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed and chilled
- 1/2 cup ice-cold water

For the filling:

- 3 lb. sweet apples, such as Golden Delicious or McIntosh, peeled, cored, and thinly sliced
- 3/4 cup sugar, plus 1 tbsp. for sprinkling
- 3 tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 1/2 tbsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed and chilled
- 1 egg, lightly beaten with 1 tbsp. water

**1** Make the crust: Pulse flour, sugar, cornmeal, rosemary, salt, and butter in a food processor into pea-size crumbles. Add water; pulse until dough comes together. Form 2/3 dough into a flat disk; repeat with remaining 1/3 dough. Wrap disks in plastic wrap; chill for 1 hour.

**2** On a lightly floured surface, roll larger disk of dough into a 12" round. Fit dough into a 9" pie plate. Trim edges, leaving about 1" dough overhanging edge of plate. Roll the smaller disk into an 8" square. Slice into 8 strips; chill both doughs 30 minutes.

**3** Make the filling: Toss apples, 3/4 cup sugar, cornstarch, 1 tbsp. cinnamon, lemon juice, vanilla, and salt in a large bowl. Arrange apples evenly over dough in the pie plate; dot with butter. To make the



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lattice, lay 4 dough strips horizontally across top of pie, fold first and third strips back on themselves, then lay another strip perpendicular to them, just off center. Unfold first and third strips, fold back second and fourth strips, then lay another strip to the right of first perpendicular strip. Repeat weave pattern with remaining dough strips; chill 30 minutes.

**4** Heat oven to 400°. Trim edges of dough and crimp. Brush with egg mixture; sprinkle with 1 tbsp. sugar and remaining cinnamon. Bake until crust is golden brown and apples are tender, about 1 hour. Let cool completely before serving.

### ★ BLUE-RIBBON PECAN PIE

**SERVES 8**

This pecan pie's toffee-like interior and beautiful bronze top layer of halved pecans (pictured on [page 86](#)) won Rubyane Surritte first place in the pie contest at Oklahoma's Drummond Ranch.

- Flour, for dusting
- $\frac{1}{2}$  recipe Buttery Pie Dough (see above right)
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup packed light brown sugar
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. kosher salt
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups roughly chopped pecans, plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup halves

**1** On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 12" round. Fit into a 9" pie plate. Trim edges and crimp; chill 30 minutes.

**2** Heat oven to 350°. Whisk corn syrup, sugars, butter, vanilla, salt, and eggs in a bowl; fold in chopped pecans. Distribute filling evenly over dough; arrange pecan halves decoratively around the inside edge of the pie crust. Bake until crust is golden brown and filling is set, about 1 hour. Let cool completely before serving.

### BOYSENBERRY PIE

**SERVES 8**

Blackberries or raspberries can be substituted for boysenberries in the filling for this jammy pie (pictured on [page 86](#)).

- Flour, for dusting
- 1 recipe Buttery Pie Dough (see above right)
- 6 cups boysenberries
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar, plus 1 tbsp. for sprinkling
- 3 tbsp. cornstarch
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. grated lemon zest
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. kosher salt
- 1 egg, lightly beaten with 1 tbsp. water

**1** On a lightly floured surface, roll 1 disk of dough into a 12" round. Fit into a 9" pie plate. Trim edges, leaving 1" dough overhanging edge of plate; chill 30 minutes.

**2** Heat oven to 400°. Combine 1 cup berries,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon, zest, and salt in a bowl; mash and mix together. Stir in remaining berries; pour over dough. Roll remaining disk of dough into a 12" round and place over top of pie. Pinch top and bottom edges together and fold under; using the tines of a fork, press edges to seal. Brush with egg mixture; sprinkle with 1 tbsp. sugar. Cut several 1"-long slits in top of pie. Bake until crust is golden brown and filling is bubbling, about 1 hour. Let cool completely before serving.

### BUTTERY PIE DOUGH

**MAKES ENOUGH FOR 2 CRUSTS**

This butter-rich, flaky crust is easy to make and works well as the foundation for pies with fruit, custard, or mousse fillings.

- 3 cups flour
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 14 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed and chilled
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup ice-cold water

Pulse flour, salt, and butter in a food processor into pea-size crumbles. Add water; pulse until dough comes together. Divide dough in half and flatten each half into a disk. Wrap disks in plastic wrap and chill 1 hour before using.

### CARAMEL-APPLE PIE

**SERVES 8**

A cinnamon-spiced sauce of butter and melted caramel candies poured over apples gives this pie (pictured on [page 86](#)), from Oklahoma home baker Amanda Cadwell, a wonderfully sweet, gooey filling.

- Flour, for dusting
- 1 recipe Buttery Pie Dough (see above)
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup packed light brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup granulated sugar, plus 1 tbsp. for sprinkling
- 3 tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 tbsp. ground cinnamon
- 15 soft caramel cubes (see [page 108](#))
- 8 tart apples, such as Granny Smith, peeled, cored, and thinly sliced
- 1 egg, lightly beaten with 1 tbsp. water

**1** On a lightly floured surface, roll 1 disk of dough into a 12" round. Fit into a 9" pie plate. Trim edges, leaving 1" dough overhanging edge of plate; chill 30 minutes.

**2** Melt butter in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium heat. Stir in brown sugar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup granulated sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon, and caramels; cook, stirring occasionally, until sugars are dissolved and sauce is slightly thick, 5-7 minutes.

**3** Heat oven to 400°. Arrange apples over dough. Pour sauce evenly over apples. Roll remaining disk of dough into a 12" round and place over top of pie. Pinch top and bottom edges together and fold under; crimp edges. Brush with egg mixture; sprinkle with 1 tbsp. sugar. Cut three 1"-long slits in top of pie. Bake until crust is golden brown and filling is bubbling, about 1 hour. Let cool completely before serving.

### NELSON PEAR PIE

**SERVES 8**

This elegant pie (pictured on [page 86](#)) from Drummond Ranch pie party contestant Gretchen Pierce features a filling of fresh pears drizzled with cream and sprinkled with sugar and flour.

- Flour, for dusting, plus 3 tbsp.
- $\frac{1}{2}$  recipe Buttery Pie Dough (see above)
- 4 large ripe Bartlett pears, peeled, cored, and thinly sliced
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar
- 1 cup heavy cream

**1** On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 12" round. Fit into a 9" pie plate. Trim edges and crimp; chill for 30 minutes.

**2** Heat oven to 400°. Fan half the pears evenly over dough. Sprinkle half each of sugar and flour over pears and drizzle with half the cream. Repeat with



remaining pears, sugar, flour, and cream. Bake until crust is golden and filling is set, about 1 hour. Let cool completely before serving.

## PLUM PIE

**SERVES 8**

Grape jelly intensifies the flavor of ripe plums in this sweet-tart summer pie (pictured on [page 86](#)) from Drummond Ranch pie contestant Tracy Harris.

- Flour, for dusting
- 1 recipe Buttery Pie Dough (see [page 92](#))
- 3 tbsp. cornstarch
- 1/2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 cup grape jelly
- 3 tbsp. sugar, plus 1 tbsp. for sprinkling
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 10 ripe plums, pitted and thinly sliced
- 1 egg, lightly beaten with 1 tbsp. water

**1** On a lightly floured surface, roll 1 disk of dough into a 12" round. Fit into a 9" pie plate. Trim edges, leaving 1" dough overhanging edge of plate; chill 30 minutes.

**2** Heat oven to 400°. Whisk cornstarch, lemon juice, and 1 tbsp. water in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in jelly, 3 tbsp. sugar, and salt until smooth. Reserve about 12 slices of plums for garnish and add remaining plums to bowl; toss to combine. Arrange plum mixture evenly over dough. Roll remaining disk of dough into a 12" round and place over top of pie. Pinch top and bottom edges together and fold under; crimp edges. Brush with egg mixture and arrange reserved plum slices over top; sprinkle with 1 tbsp. sugar. Cut three 1"-long slits in top of pie. Bake until crust is golden brown and filling is bubbling, about 1 hour. Let cool completely before serving.

## RAZZLEBERRY PIE

**SERVES 8**

Strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, and raspberries are brightened with lemon juice and zest to make the filling for this juicy pie (pictured on [page 86](#)) from Drummond Ranch pie party contestant Sherri Hagenhoff.

- Flour, for dusting
- 1 recipe Buttery Pie Dough (see [page 92](#))
- 10 oz. strawberries, hulled and quartered
- 1 cup blackberries
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup raspberries
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3 tbsp. cornstarch
- 1/2 tsp. fresh lemon juice, plus 1 tbsp. grated zest
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 egg, lightly beaten with 1 tbsp. water

**1** On a lightly floured surface, roll 1 disk of dough into a 12" round. Fit into a 9" pie plate. Trim edges, leaving 1" dough overhanging edge of plate; chill 30 minutes.

**2** Simmer berries, sugar, cornstarch, juice, zest, and salt in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat until juices become a slightly thickened sauce, 18-20 minutes; let cool to room temperature.

**3** Heat oven to 400°. Pour berry mixture over dough. Roll remaining disk of dough into a 12" round and place over top of pie. Pinch top and bottom edges together and fold under; using the tines of a fork, crimp edges. Brush with egg mixture and cut several 1"-long slits in top of pie. Bake until crust is golden brown and filling is bubbling, about 1 hour. Let cool completely before serving.

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We don't have cuisine in Nebraska, we have food. When you take on the meat loaf special at the tavern in my central Nebraska town, Dannebrog, you're served not a slice but a whole loaf, as if they're provisioning you for a trek on the Oregon Trail, along which wagon trains once traversed the Cornhusker State. It's not just that we love to eat plenty of our Nebraska beef, it's also because of our farmstead legacy. The days of threshing crews may be over, but small town meals are still put together like we're girding for the harvest. What's on the plate here in the Middle of Everywhere reflects our diverse settler history. Danes came to Dannebrog in the 1870s, so you occasionally find *ebelskivers*, those potbellied pancakes, at local places like Kay's Korner and the rolled beef flank called *rullepølse* at Kerry's Grocery. The German-run bakery sells pizza like the Italians in Omaha do, only with sauerkraut on it. (It's better than it sounds.) Just west of us in Farwell is a Czech cemetery full of pioneers who brought goulash to Omaha, while the nearest town of any size, Grand Island (population 49,000), was German. Now it's Thai, Honduran, Bosnian, and Somali. Yes, in cattle-heavy Nebraska the main course is still beef, but the rest of it? That depends on what town you're in and what street you're on. —Roger Welsch, author of *Cather's Kitchens* (Bison Books, 2002)



# NEBR





Clockwise from left: the prime rib at Johnny's Cafe in Omaha; Piccolo Pete's chef Frank Skryja; the fiberglass steer atop Anthony's in Omaha; the goudarooni, a beef-stuffed calzone, at Orsi's in Omaha. Recipes start on [page 104](#).





# HERE'S THE BEEF

Once home to enormous stockyards, Omaha still boasts glorious steakhouses

**I**T'S 6:30 ON A Saturday night in Omaha, and I'm standing in the kitchen at Cascio's Steakhouse staring at a flattop grill. It's a sea of steaks, the grill guys flipping 70 house-cut New York strips in waves. Beside me, a young food runner named John Davis, sweaty bangs flopping over heavy-framed eyeglasses, fits a dozen plates of steak and foil-wrapped baked potatoes onto a tray like puzzle pieces. He heaves the burden onto his shoulder, groaning "aw, f\*@k," then pushes through the kitchen door, calling out as he turns corners, "Hot food comin' round!" I scurry after him to one of the 2,200-seat restaurant's basement party rooms, where members of the Cornhusker Corvette Club await their meals.

By now most of the hundreds of diners Cascio's will serve tonight have been seated. And in two hours, the house will be empty. That's how dinner happens in Nebraska's largest city: on the early side. Good thing, too, since it leaves more time to digest everything before hitting the sack. This is a town surrounded by grazing lands, so meals here almost always feature a big slab of beef—particularly at classic restaurants like Cascio's, founded in 1946 by owner Alfie Cascio's grandfather, Joe, and Joe's brother Al, a former bootlegger.

It's places like this that keep me pining for Omaha, a city I first visited in 2008 after completing a writing residency in Nebraska City, an hour south of here. Before heading back to New York, I thought, *Nebraska has two more things to offer me right now: Western wear and steak.* So I stocked up on cowgirl shirts, snapped one on, and drove to Omaha to tour its steakhouses. I ogled the neon globe sign and swooping mid-century roofline of the 70-year-old Gorat's. I popped in for a gander at Brother Sebastian's monk-robed servers, monastery-themed rooms, and throwback menu featuring dishes like chicken cordon bleu and filet Oskar, steak topped with hollandaise and crabmeat. And I settled in at Johnny's Cafe, a chophouse I knew from its cameo in the movie *About Schmidt* by Omaha-born filmmaker Alexander Payne. There, I sat in a rolling

**Executive chef Albert Pokorny, left, and grill master Gary Johnson work the flattop grill at Cascio's Steakhouse in Omaha.**







ARIANA LINDQUIST





**Clockwise from top left: steak with crab and hollandaise; Sally Kawa of Johnny's Cafe; white bean soup; Piccolo Pete's Dee Graves with the prime rib sandwich. Recipes start on [page 104](#).**

Naugahyde swivel chair before a backlit photographic mural depicting a cattle run, ate a juicy T-bone with a delicate, nearly sweet flavor, and thought, *I'll return some day*. Omaha's cow palaces, with their vintage décors and red-blooded meals, had me in their thrall.

Five years later, I've come back, as promised, to find out more about the history and cuisine of a city whose name is nearly synonymous with steak. The first thing I discover is that I'm not the only one who's so enamored. At the Drover, a fireplace-warmed, wood-paneled bar and grill in south central Omaha, I meet diners who've driven from as far away as Kansas City and eastern Iowa just to eat here. I meet waitstaff who have held their jobs for 20 years and managers who started out when it was still known as the Cork and Cleaver, a franchise that introduced the salad bar—Omaha's

first—that the folks here remain proud of.

That was four decades ago, “or 75 pounds ago for me,” says Spike Sabine, the Drover's bearded and bullish restaurant manager. He's consumed enough of his own food to understand its appeal: “The whole deal is, ‘I'm coming to Omaha and I want the biggest, baddest good steak you can put in front of me.’” He serves me exactly that—the whiskey strip, a 14-ounce New York strip steak that's marinated in bourbon, soy sauce, and garlic before it's seared on the grill to brand it with grate marks—“that's your presentation side”—then cooked over open flame. It's winey and briny, with a yielding texture, a slightly sweet finish, and no trace of the minerality or pronounced chew of the steaks I am used to eating back home. The reason, Sabine explains, is that “this is wet-aged beef,”

shipped and rested in its own juices in Cryovac packaging. Compared with the dry-aged beef common in New York, which hangs for several weeks, or even months, in chophouse meat lockers before serving, wet-aged steak doesn't taste better to me—just different. But Sabine is clear in his preference. “It's more tender, it holds its juices better; it doesn't even look like dry-aged.” He likes Nebraska beef but not just because it's local. After the first six months of pasturing, “it's corn-fed, not grass-fed,” he says. “It has better marbling.” Whatever its appeal, Nebraska beef is a \$12 billion industry. At the Drover, I heard a saying repeated to me often during my visit: “When the manure hits your nose, that's the smell of money.”

The mention of money calls to mind the most famous Omaha steakhouse fan, Warren Buffet. The billionaire has the massive shareholders' meeting for his company, Berkshire Hathaway, in his hometown each May, hosting parties at his favorite haunts. I go next to one of these places, Piccolo Pete's. An Italian steakhouse, it's one of a genre started in Omaha by the five Caniglia brothers, who opened several restaurants here starting in the 1940s, including one remaining location, Caniglia's Venice Inn. The brothers' sister, Grace, married another steakhouse scion, Tony Piccolo Sr. Today Piccolo Pete's neon icon, a musician piping on his tiny flute, glows over a sleepy street. But in 1922, when Tony's father Joe bought the building and turned it into a dance hall where revelers hoofed it to big bands, it was in the center of south Omaha's bustle.

“The neighborhood was a melting pot: Polish, Italian, Bohemian,” says Grace's daughter Donna Sheehan, who runs Piccolo's now with her sister Dee Graves. “The Metropolitan Utilities was next door. The stockyards were open. It was a madhouse every night here until 1 A.M.” The dance floor eventually gave way to a dining room serving dishes prepared by Frank Skryja, who's manned the burners for 36 years now. He plates me his hashbrowns, shredded potatoes fried in butter in a small steel pan until they fuse into a golden disk with a crunchy exterior encasing a creamy, fluffy center. He ladles a thick, smoky white bean and ham soup into a bowl and portions out a slab of prime rib, its moist pink flesh hugging ribbons of fat. The meat has been seasoned with garlic, dried basil and oregano, celery salt, and loads of black pepper, blasted with heat for a couple of hours, and then held at a low temperature overnight until its fragrant *jus* pools in the roasting pan. At lunchtime he slices it thinly onto thick slices of local Rotella's Italian sandwich bread and douses it in *(continued on [page 102](#))*

ARIANA LINDQUIST (4)





# STORIES TOLD THROUGH FOOD

## THE SAN FRANCISCO WAY

La Cocina believes in empowering talented entrepreneurs to make a living doing what they love to do.



### Onigilly

**Koji Kanematsu**, La Cocina participant since 2007

When Koji arrived in the US in 2006, he was surprised when he couldn't find his favorite snack, onigiri. In Japan, these hand-held, healthy snacks made of rice, gourmet toppings, and wrapped in seaweed, are available everywhere, from children's lunch boxes to the local 7-Eleven.

Koji made it his mission to introduce these snacks to San Francisco by founding **Onigilly**, a business he started at La Cocina in 2007. Onigilly has grown from catering to an Onigilly Cart and now to, not only one, but two brick-and-mortar restaurants in San Francisco's Financial District. [onigilly.com](http://onigilly.com)



### La Luna Cupcakes

**Elvia Buendía**, La Cocina participant since 2009

Ever since Elvia was a young girl in Mexico, she relished trying different cakes at parties, but was disappointed when she saw pretty cakes that were overly sweetened or delicious but poorly decorated treats.

Inspired by her love of sweets, Elvia started **La Luna Cupcakes** in 2009 with the idea that cupcakes and cake pops could be delicious, natural, and locally-sourced. Today, La Luna Cupcakes offers a focused menu of both traditional American cupcakes and options inspired by flavors she grew up with in Mexico. Through her creative flavors and product variety, Elvia always believes that her customers should "live life to the fullest, one cupcake at a time."

[lalunacupcakes.com](http://lalunacupcakes.com)



### Minnie Bell's Soul Movement

**Fernay McPherson**, La Cocina participant since 2012

A San Francisco native, Fernay has been cooking for as long as she can remember. She started by mixing soap suds in a bowl at the age of 2, began baking cakes at 9, and moved on to helping her late Grandmother Lillie Bell and great Aunt Minnie prepare daily meals and big holiday dinners by 15. It was these strong women that inspired her to start her company, **Minnie Bell's**, at the San Francisco Street Food Festival, where it was named "Best New Comer" in 2012. Having taken traditional family recipes, including corn bread and fried chicken, and reinventing them with San Francisco flair, Fernay says she's excited to fill the void of soul food in mobile vending. "With my family lending a helping hand, we want people to feel like they are home. Minnie Bell's will be a great addition." [minniebells.com](http://minniebells.com)

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NEBRASKA



**Chef Clayton Chapman at the Grey Plume in Omaha.**

ARIANA LINDQUIST





ME  
an

## Local Boy Makes Good

THIS PAST DECEMBER AT the Grey Plume in Omaha, chef-owner Clayton Chapman set his *mise en place* in front of me. It was a thing to behold. Diverse and vibrant with all sorts of Midwest fruits and vegetables, it contained the building blocks for the dishes I would eat for dinner: delicate buttermilk gnocchi topped with caramelized Bartlett pears, preserved lemon peel, micro basil, and tart tomato powder; a pizzette chockablock with shiitake mushrooms, cold-smoked cauliflower, pickled ramps, persimmons, and local honey; and a colorful salad of finely shaved beets, watermelon radishes, turnips, and carrot and celery curls. Fantastic. The best part? The Grey Plume, elegantly dressed in recycled barn wood and wine bottles, is ardently sustainable and locavore through and through, with 90 percent of its ingredients hailing from nearby. How, then, did the chef procure such

lustrous produce in midwinter, I wondered. Imbued with a Nebraskan's work ethic and aversion to waste, Chapman, 27, preserves some 3,000 jars of peak produce in his tiny kitchen each year. He and his staff raise microgreens under grow lamps, churn butter, and whip ricotta with the buttermilk, and they make the most of each season. In summer, meaty steelhead trout from an aqua farm housed in former hog barns is lacquered with a fish *jus* glaze and served with tangy cherry tomatoes, barely cooked carrots, and compressed cucumber; come cooler weather, those tomatoes are oven-dried, the carrots puréed, and foraged oyster mushrooms and winter spinach swapped in for the cukes. Both versions are wonderful. In 2010, the Green Restaurant Association named the Grey Plume the greenest dining establishment in the country. That may be true, but it's also just damned good. —B.A.





## BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

WHEN I CAME TO Nebraska 25 years ago to teach at the university in Lincoln, I visited Omaha, an hour away, and discovered the Bohemian Cafe, founded there in 1924. With its folkloric décor and waitresses in lace-edged *kroje*, it reminded me of the old country. Its foods—rich duck liver dumpling soup; *svickova*, sauerbraten enriched with sour cream; sweet and sour cabbage; *kolaches*, pastries with poppyseed, Bavarian cream, prune, cherry, and other fruit centers—were like the dishes my grandmothers prepared for Sunday family gatherings in Prague, where I grew up. I left there in 1968 when I was 20. But at the Bohemian Cafe, I felt right back at home.

I was fleeing Communism. But thousands of Czechs had already settled in Nebraska, as well as Kansas and Oklahoma, in the late 1800s, lured by offers of free land under the Homestead Act. Their cuisine was based on the seasonal products that farmers could raise in the climate they came from. Barley and rye, cabbage, dairy: These were used in the recipes they brought with them.

Today I buy Czech hard cheeses at the farmers' market in Lincoln to bread and fry, just as I remember from when I was young. I drive 40 miles north to the village of Prague, named after my hometown, for the fried carp, a Friday night Catholic Czech tradition. In Wilber, I can find *slivovice*, a plum brandy that we Czechs believe has medicinal properties. And I gladly go to 20 or so ethnic festivals in Nebraska, Kansas, or Oklahoma each year, where I share the taste of Czechness with friends and relatives. By eating the food of our mothers, we return, at least in spirit, to the comforting fold of our families. I think this is why cuisine is the part of Czech life that is so well-preserved here. At the beginning of the 20th century, Nebraska's Czech-language newspapers were filled with letters from readers who shared experiences of substituting Nebraska produce—peppers, tomatoes, corn—in old family recipes to approximate the flavors of home.

Those recipes endure at places like the Bohemian Cafe. Waitresses like Jerry Cousal (pictured above), who has worked there since 1966, still deliver paprika-laden goulash and bread dumplings blanketed in dill gravy to Nebraskans, including those of us of Czech heritage who understand that, though the knowledge of our language in the U.S. is disappearing, in our traditional cuisine transplanted to the southern Great Plains, the culture of our homeland continues. —Mila Saskova-Pierce, associate professor of Russian and Czech, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

(continued from page 98) gravy for a knock-out version of a French dip. For Warren Buffet, Sheehan tells me, the order of choice is the chicken Parmesan. Tasting it now, I understand why. Skryja simmers his tomato sauce with steak trimmings and beef and pork bones, the breaded chicken cutlet serving as a tender canvas for the meaty-tasting red gravy.

A similar sauce is served at Anthony's Steakhouse, which was opened by owner Tony Fucinaro's father in 1967. Back then, the Italian specialties were prepared by Tony's mother, Josephine. The restaurant still uses her sauce recipe for the sides of spaghetti and penne-like *mostaccioli*. At this sprawling place off the interstate in south Omaha, a humongous fiberglass steer smiles down from the rooftop, and families sit at big tables, the fidgety kids eating meatballs and the grown-ups tucking into steaks, which I'm surprised to discover have a darkly rich, dry-aged flavor. Fucinaro tells me that the beef here is pulled from the Cryovac it's shipped in and dry-aged for two weeks. Each of the steakhouses, as it turns out, deals with its beef in a slightly different way. Some buy precut meat from the custom processor Omaha Steaks, but most get packaged short loins, comprising the top loin and tenderloin, which they cut in-house into T-bones, porterhouses, and strip steaks and age wet or sometimes dry for a matter of days.

"It's all boxed beef now. But restaurants used to hang whole carcasses," a knowledgeable fellow named Harold Norman tells me when I meet him at Anthony's. Previous executive director of the Omaha Restaurant Association and former secretary-treasurer of the Omaha Stockyards, where he worked for 46 years, the 91-year-old Norman shows up to dinner in a three-piece suit with a watch fob and declares, "I'm from the old school. The way people are today, they're too damned casual." His elegance befits his stature: Each year the Harold Norman Excellence Award is handed out at the Omaha Hospitality Hall of Fame celebration. He's treated like a star at places like Anthony's, where we share a loaded bacon-Swiss burger. It's full of moisture and flavor from a sear on the flattop in rendered steak trimmings, and comes with a crunchy pile of cornmeal-battered onion rings.

I order a few more sides—Brussels sprouts hash dotted with pancetta and an iceberg wedge salad latticed with red onions and dripping with both Italian and blue cheese dressings—as Norman shares his stories. He tells me that the Omaha Stockyards were founded in 1883 to provide a location closer than Chicago to sell and process cattle and

other animals from points west. By the 1950s, they were the largest in the world, a buzzing place where cattle, pigs, and sheep were shipped from ranches and sold to the slaughterhouses. At the 250-acre crazy quilt of pens, 40 commission firms representing ranchers sold upward of 7 million head yearly to 19 different packing houses. The stockyards went strong until the late 1960s. Then the packers figured out they didn't need the middlemen and started dealing directly with ranchers, setting up shop out on the prairie and shipping packaged beef to Omaha and beyond. By 1999 the city stockyards had closed.

"Everything is gone now except the Livestock Exchange Building," Norman sighs. That ten-story Art Deco edifice, today housing condos, still towers over south Omaha a few blocks from Johnny's Cafe, 91 years ago one of the first restaurants that sprung up at the yards' edges to feed the hundreds who worked there. Norman remembers all the old places: Ross's Steak House, opened on a dirt road; Sam Nisi's Spare Time Café, with its cooler full of steaks at the entrance; Al Caniglia's Top of the World, in an office building penthouse. They're gone now, the casualties of time and a changing Omaha, whose current economy is driven by telecommunications not cattle. But Johnny's, where I had my first Nebraska steak, and where Harold Norman has eaten at least once a month since 1966, survives. So I return to it. Displayed in the foyer, a "Good Morning Menu" from the 1940s when the place was open until the wee hours reads: "A pick me up? Why, yes. How about a whiskey sour." I order one. Sitting on a saddle-topped stool in the barroom amid photographs of the old stockyards, I raise a glass to one last filet, the delicious legacy of a town built on beef. —Betsy Andrews

## THE GUIDE: NEBRASKA

**Anthony's** 7220 F Street (402/331-7575; [anthony steakhouse.com](http://anthony steakhouse.com)) **Bohemian Cafe** 1406 S. 13th Street (402/342-9838; [bohemian cafe.net](http://bohemian cafe.net)) **Brother Sebastian's** 1350 S. 119th Street (402/330-0300; [brosebs.com](http://brosebs.com)) **Caniglia's Venice Inn** 6920 Pacific Street (402/556-3111; [canigliasveniceinn.com](http://canigliasveniceinn.com)) **Cascio's** 1620 S. 10th Street (402/345-8313; [casciossteakhouse.com](http://casciossteakhouse.com)) **The Drover** 2121 S. 73rd Street (402/391-7440; [droverrestaurant.com](http://droverrestaurant.com)) **Gorat's** 4917 Center Street (402/551-3733; [goratsomaha.com](http://goratsomaha.com)) **The Grey Plume** 220 S. 31st Avenue, Suite 3101 (402/763-4447; [thegreyplume.com](http://thegreyplume.com)) **Johnny's Cafe** 4702 S. 27th Street (402/731-4774; [johnnyscafe.com](http://johnnyscafe.com)) **Piccolo Pete's** 2202 S. 20th Street (402/342-9038; [piccolopetes restaurant.net](http://piccolopetes restaurant.net)) ★ For more information on visiting Nebraska, go to [visitnebraska.com](http://visitnebraska.com).





The blue cheese wedge salad from Anthony's Steakhouse in Omaha (see page 104 for recipe).



## Appetizers and Sides

### ★ BLUE CHEESE WEDGE SALAD

**SERVES 4**

Both blue cheese and Italian dressings adorn this classic iceberg wedge salad (pictured on [page 103](#)) from Anthony's Steakhouse in Omaha.

- 1/3 cup white wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup finely chopped parsley
- 1 tbsp. dried oregano
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 1/3 cups olive oil
- 3/4 cup crumbled blue cheese
- 1/4 cup half & half
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 3 tbsp. sour cream
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. granulated garlic
- 1/2 tsp. onion powder
- 1/4 tsp. celery seeds
- 1 head iceberg lettuce, cored and quartered
- 20 grape or cherry tomatoes
- 1/2 cucumber, thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced into rings

1 Whisk vinegar, 3 tbsp. parsley, oregano, garlic, salt, and pepper in a bowl. While whisking, slowly drizzle

in oil until emulsified; set Italian dressing aside. In another bowl, stir 1/3 cup blue cheese with the half & half, mayonnaise, sour cream, juice, granulated garlic, onion powder, celery seeds, salt, and pepper.

2 Divide iceberg quarters, tomatoes, and cucumber among 4 plates. Top with onion rings and drizzle with Italian dressing. Crumble remaining blue cheese over top and spoon over blue cheese dressing; garnish with remaining parsley.

### ★ CORNMEAL-CRUSTED ONION RINGS

**SERVES 6-8**

Buttermilk-dipped and cornmeal-crusted onion rings are fried extra-crispy at Anthony's Steakhouse in Omaha (pictured on [page 105](#)).

- 2 large sweet onions, such as Vidalia, sliced crosswise 1/2" thick and separated into rings
- 2 cups flour
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1/3 cup cornstarch
- 3 tbsp. baking powder
- 1 1/2 tbsp. seasoned salt, such as Lawry's, plus more to taste
- Canola oil, for frying

1 Submerge onions in a bowl of ice water; soak 30 minutes. Meanwhile, place 1 cup flour in a bowl. Stir

buttermilk and milk in another bowl. Whisk remaining flour with cornmeal, cornstarch, baking powder, and seasoned salt in a third bowl; set aside.

2 Pour enough oil to reach a depth of 2" in a 6-qt. saucepan. Heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 350°. Drain onions and pat dry with paper towels. Working in batches, dredge onions in flour, shaking off excess, dip in milk, and then in cornmeal. Fry, flipping once, until golden and crisp, 1-2 minutes. Drain rings on paper towels; sprinkle with more seasoned salt.

### ★ HASHBROWNS

**SERVES 1-2**

Fluffy inside and golden outside, these pan-fried potatoes (pictured top right on [page 106](#)) are a signature of the Omaha restaurant Piccolo Pete's.

- 1 lb. russet potatoes
- 5 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 Peel potatoes and shred using the large holes of a box grater. Transfer potatoes to a colander; rinse under cold running water until water runs clear. Place colander over a bowl; squeeze out as much water as possible from potatoes. Pat dry with paper towels.

2 Heat 3 tbsp. butter in an 8" nonstick skillet over medium heat. Stir in potatoes. Using a spatula, gently press potatoes, molding them to fit the skillet. Cook until edges are golden brown, 20-22 minutes.

3 Cover skillet with a large inverted plate, flip hash-browns onto plate, then slide back into the skillet, cooked side up. Drizzle remaining butter around the edge of the skillet and cook until golden brown on the bottom, about 12 minutes more. Slide onto a plate and season with salt and pepper.

### WHITE BEAN SOUP

**SERVES 8**

Finely ground ham infuses this simple soup with smoky richness (pictured bottom right on [page 98](#)) in this recipe from Omaha's Piccolo Pete's.

- 1 lb. Great Northern beans, soaked overnight and drained
- 10 oz. smoked ham, roughly chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Bring beans and 10 cups water to a boil in a 6-qt. saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, covered, until beans are very tender, about 1 1/2 hours. Meanwhile, pulse ham in a food processor until finely ground. When beans are tender, uncover and using a slotted spoon, transfer 2/3 beans to food processor with ham. Purée until very smooth and return mixture to pot. Continue to cook until soup is slightly thick, 25-30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

## Main Dishes

### FILET OSKAR

(Steak with Crab and Hollandaise)

**SERVES 4**

Brother Sebastian's in Omaha serves up this decadent crab-and-hollandaise-draped riff on surf and turf (pictured top left on [page 98](#)).

- 2 cups, plus 3 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 4 egg yolks
- 1 1/2 tsp. red wine vinegar
- 1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper, plus more for garnish
- 2 tbsp. canola oil

## 6 SHARP PLAYERS

Slicing into a juicy steak is part of the pleasure of eating it. Our favorite tools for the job include the Japanese **1 Global GSF-4023 Steak Knives**, whose high-carbon stainless-steel blades feature steep edges with what we imagine is the sharpness of a samurai sword. Like many fine Western models, Germany's **2 Wüsthof Classic Ikon Steak Knives** have full-tang blades, meaning they extend into the handle for durability and sturdiness; their razor-thin blades make extra-clean cuts. Named after Tokyo's famed Shima Steakhouse, elegant **3 Shun Shima Steak Knives** feature acutely angled edges for maximum sharpness and inlaid ebony handles contoured for balance and comfort. We love the heft and classic looks of the walnut handles and wide serrated blades on **4 Chicago Cutlery Steak House Knives**. Inspired by 19th-century French shepherds' folding blades, elegant **5 Laguiole Steak Knives** come with handles in an array of colors to brighten our table. The fine, thin blades on **6 J.A. Henckels International Classic Forged Steak Knives** end in sharp points that we found excellent for skewering. For information on purchasing these knives, see [THE PANTRY, page 108](#). —Dominique Lemoine





- 4 filet mignon steaks (about 6 oz. each)  
Kosher salt and finely ground black pepper, to taste
- 8 oz. jumbo lump crabmeat, picked over for shell pieces
- 1 bunch asparagus, trimmed and steamed  
Finely chopped parsley, for garnish  
Sautéed green beans and baked potatoes, for serving (optional)

**1** Heat 2 cups butter in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-low heat. Skim and discard film from surface. Pour clarified butter from pan into a bowl, leaving milky sediment behind. Fill a 4-qt. saucepan with 2" of water; bring to a simmer over medium heat and rest a heatproof bowl over pan. Add egg yolks, vinegar, cayenne, and 1 tsp. water to the bowl; cook, whisking constantly, until a thick sauce has formed, 4–5 minutes. Slowly whisk in clarified butter to make a smooth hollandaise; keep sauce warm.

**2** Heat 1 tbsp. butter with oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Season steaks with salt and pepper and add to skillet; cook, flipping once, until browned and cooked to desired doneness, 4–5 minutes for medium rare; keep warm.

**3** Wipe out skillet and melt remaining butter over medium heat. Add crab; cook until warmed, 1–2 minutes. To serve, divide steaks among plates; top with crabmeat and asparagus. Spoon hollandaise over top; garnish with cayenne and parsley. Serve with green beans and baked potatoes, if you like.

### GLAZED TROUT WITH CARROT PURÉE AND SPÄTZLE

**SERVES 2–4**

Grilled trout (pictured bottom left on [page 106](#)) is



**Cornmeal-crusted onion rings** (see recipe on facing page).

lacquered in a glaze that is fragrant with fennel and thyme in this adaptation of a recipe from the Grey Plume in Omaha.

**For the glaze and carrot purée:**

- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 small bulb fennel, trimmed and thinly sliced
- ½ small yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 3 plum tomatoes, cored and quartered
- 3 sprigs thyme
- 1 lemon, zested and quartered
- 4 cups chicken stock
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 ¼ cup carrot juice (see [page 108](#))

- 1 ½ tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 2 medium carrots, thinly sliced

**For the spätzle:**

- 2 cups flour
- ½ cup crème fraîche
- ½ cup milk
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped thyme
- 1 ¼ tsp. Dijon mustard
- 3 eggs
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 oz. baby spinach

**For the trout:**

- 2 1-lb. trout, cleaned and scaled
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- Zest of 2 lemons
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

**1** Make the glaze: Melt 2 tbsp. butter in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add fennel and onion; cook until soft, 10–12 minutes. Add tomatoes, thyme, and quartered lemon; cook until tomatoes are broken down, 8–10 minutes. Add stock; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook until liquid is reduced by half, about 30 minutes. Strain liquid, discarding vegetables, and return to saucepan; bring to a simmer. Cook until reduced by half again, 15–20 minutes. Remove glaze from heat; stir in 2 tbsp. butter, plus the zest, salt, and pepper. Make the purée: Boil remaining butter with carrot juice, vinegar, carrots, salt, pepper, and ½ cup water in a 2-qt. saucepan until carrots are very tender, about 20 minutes; purée until smooth in a blender. Keep both glaze and purée warm.

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Clockwise from top left: Piccolo Pete's spaghetti marinara; hashbrowns; steakhouse chicken Parmesan; glazed trout with carrot purée and spätzle. Recipes start on page 104.

2 Make the spätzle: Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Whisk flour, crème fraîche, milk, thyme, mustard, eggs, and half the zest with salt and pepper in a bowl into a smooth batter. Place a colander with large holes over the boiling water and working in batches, use a rubber spatula to press batter through holes into water. Cook until spätzle float, 2-3 minutes. Transfer spätzle to a colander. Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add spätzle, salt, and pepper; cook until golden, 8-10 minutes. Stir in spinach, remaining zest, and the juice.

3 Grill the trout: Heat a charcoal grill or set a gas grill to high. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium-high heat.) Brush trout with oil and season inside with zest, salt, and pepper. Grill, flipping once, until slightly charred and cooked, 15-18 minutes.

4 To serve, spread carrot purée on the bottom of 2 plates, top each plate with spätzle and a trout; brush trout generously with glaze.

#### GOUDAROONI

SERVES 10-12

Orsi's Bakery in Omaha makes this huge 14" x 9" ground beef, potato, and mozzarella calzone, enriched with a tangy tomato sauce (pictured on page 95).

For the dough:

- 1/2 tbsp. olive oil, plus more for greasing
- 1/2 tbsp. sugar
- 1 1/4-oz. packet active dry yeast
- 4 cups "00" flour, preferably Caputo Pizzeria Flour (see page 108), plus more for dusting

- 1 tbsp. kosher salt
- Fine semolina, for dusting

For the filling:

- 1 1/2 lb. Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 tsp. granulated garlic
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 lb. ground beef
- 1 6-oz. can tomato paste
- 1 tsp. dried basil
- 1/2 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 1/2 tsp. sugar
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup grated pecorino romano cheese

1 Make the dough: Combine oil, sugar, yeast, and 1 1/4 cups water heated to 115° in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook; let sit until foamy, about 10 minutes. Mix flour and salt in a bowl. With the motor running, slowly add flour mixture; mix until a smooth dough forms, 8-10 minutes. Transfer dough to a greased baking sheet; cover with plastic wrap. Let sit at room temperature until doubled in size, 1-1 1/2 hours.

2 Make the filling: Place a pizza stone in the oven; heat to 500°. Toss potatoes with 1/4 cup oil, 1/2 tsp. granulated garlic, salt, and pepper on a baking sheet and spread into an even layer; bake until tender, 8-10 minutes. Heat remaining oil in a 10" skillet over

ARIANA LINDQUIST (4)



# SAVEUR MENU

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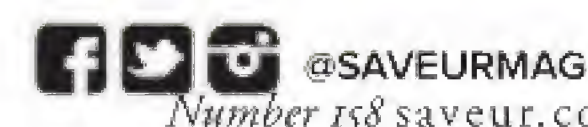


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medium heat. Add onion; cook until soft, about 8 minutes. Add beef, remaining garlic, salt, and pepper. Cook, stirring and breaking up meat, until browned, 8-10 minutes. Add tomato paste, basil, chile flakes, sugar, salt, pepper, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water. Cook until sauce is slightly thick, 5-7 minutes; set aside.

**3** On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into an 18" x 20" rectangle about  $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick. Slide a large semolina-dusted pizza peel under half of rectangle lengthwise. Spread half each of the mozzarella and pecorino over the dough on peel, leaving a 1" border. Lay potato slices over cheeses, overlapping, and spoon meat sauce over the top. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Fold other half dough up and over filling; press edges to seal and working from one end to the other, roll and crimp edges. Cut two slits in the top of the calzone and slide onto stone; bake until crust is puffed and charred in spots, 30-35 minutes.

### ★ PICCOLO PETE'S PRIME RIB

**SERVES 8-10**

Prime rib (pictured on [page 94](#)) is a beloved Omaha steakhouse specialty. One of our favorite versions comes from Piccolo Pete's, where the meat is rubbed with Italian spices and blasted with high heat to form a flavorful crust.

- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup coarsely ground black pepper
- 3 tbsp. dried basil
- 2 tbsp. dried oregano
- 1 tbsp. dry mustard
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp. celery salt
- 15 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Butchers' string, for tying
- 5 lb. boneless prime rib
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups dry red wine

Heat oven to 200°. Purée pepper, basil, oregano, mustard, celery salt, garlic, and salt in a food processor into a paste; set aside. Using butchers' string, tie meat securely at 1" intervals; place in a roasting pan. Pour wine into pan and cover pan tightly with aluminum foil. Roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the meat registers 105°, 2  $\frac{1}{2}$ -3 hours. Remove from oven and increase oven temperature to 500°. Uncover meat and rub with spice paste. Return to oven and cook, uncovered, until the meat's internal temperature reaches 120°, 15-20 minutes more. Let meat rest for 20 minutes before slicing. Serve pan drippings on the side.

### PRIME RIB SANDWICH

**SERVES 4**

Sliced prime rib is sandwiched on thick toast under a blanket of rich gravy made from pan drippings (pictured on [page 98](#)) at Piccolo Pete's in Omaha.

- $\frac{1}{2}$  recipe Piccolo Pete's prime rib, thinly sliced, plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup pan drippings (see recipe above)
- 3 tbsp. flour
- $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups beef stock
- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 8 slices Texas toast, or thickly sliced Italian bread, lightly toasted (see [page 108](#))
- Mashed potatoes, for serving (optional)

**1** Heat  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup pan drippings in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in flour; cook 2 minutes. Whisk in  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook until gravy is slightly thick, 4-5 minutes. Stir in butter, salt, and pepper; keep warm.

**2** Simmer remaining pan drippings and stock in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir in prime

rib and cover; cook until heated through, about 6 minutes. Place 1 slice of bread each on 4 serving plates. Place  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the prime rib over each bread slice and top each with a remaining bread slice. Ladle gravy over the top. Serve with mashed potatoes, if you like.

### ★ STEAKHOUSE CHICKEN PARMESAN

**SERVES 4**

Meaty tomato sauce and gooey mozzarella blanket tender breaded chicken cutlets in this recipe (pictured on [page 106](#)) from Omaha's Piccolo Pete's.

- 1 cup canola oil
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 4 oz. each), pounded  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup flour
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup seasoned bread crumbs
- $\frac{1}{2}$  recipe Piccolo Pete's marinara sauce (see recipe below)
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella

**1** Heat oil in a 12" skillet until an instant-read thermometer reads 325°. Working in batches, season chicken with salt and pepper and dredge in flour, shaking off excess. Dip in eggs and coat in bread crumbs. Fry, flipping once, until golden and cooked through, 5-7 minutes. Transfer chicken to paper towels to drain; season with salt and pepper.

**2** Heat oven broiler to high. Spread  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sauce evenly in a 9" x 13" baking dish. Arrange chicken over sauce, overlapping slightly. Top with remaining sauce and sprinkle with cheese. Broil until cheese is melted and browned, 2-4 minutes.

### ★ STEAKHOUSE SPAGHETTI MARINARA

**SERVES 8**

Chefs at Omaha's Piccolo Pete's flavor the marinara sauce for their spaghetti (pictured on [page 106](#)) with beef steak trimmings and pork and beef bones.

- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup olive oil
- 1 lb. beef shank bones, trimmed
- $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. raw steak trimmings (ask your butcher for this)
- 1 pork neck bone
- 10 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup tomato paste
- $3\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp. sugar
- 2 tsp. celery seeds
- 4 sprigs basil
- 3 28-oz. cans crushed tomatoes
- 2 bay leaves
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 lb. spaghetti
- Grated Parmesan, for serving

**1** Heat oil in an 8-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Working in batches, cook bones and steak trimmings until browned, 7-9 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Add garlic and onion; cook until golden, 6-8 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook until slightly caramelized, about 3 minutes. Add sugar, celery seeds, basil, tomatoes, bay leaves, salt, and pepper; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; add bones and trimmings. Cook, until sauce is reduced by  $\frac{1}{3}$ , about 1 hour. Discard bones, trimmings, basil, and bay; shred any meat, if possible, and add to sauce.

**2** Bring a large saucepan of salted water to a boil. Cook spaghetti until al dente, about 10 minutes. Drain and divide among serving bowls; ladle with sauce. Sprinkle with Parmesan.



# THE PANTRY

## A Guide to Resources

*In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered ingredients and information too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!*

BY KELLIE EVANS

### Fare

To prepare the apricot–almond tart recipe (see page 18), purchase **potato flour** (\$6 for a 24-oz. bag) and almond meal (\$12 for a 16-oz. bag) from Bob's Red Mill (800/349-2173; bobsredmill.com). When in Rotterdam, Netherlands, visit **Wha Kong 2 restaurant** (Vlietlaan 47, 3061 DV; 31/10/452-8681) and **Tak-Lee** (Jacob Van Campenplein 128 3067 LD; 31/10/420-6265) for Indo-Chinese fusion. Find seasonal **strawberries** at Deeply Rooted Strawberries (860/921-3434; deeplyrootedfarms.net). Try **Kölsch beers**: Order **Früh Kölsch** (\$3 for a 16.9-oz. bottle; 609/737-0358; hopewellbuyrite.com); **Gaffel Kölsch** (\$2 for a 12-oz. bottle; 7118/239-7600; bierkraft.com); **New Holland Full Circle Kölsch** (\$11 for a six-pack; 877/624-1982; internetwines.com); **Reissdorf Kölsch** (\$4 for a 500 ml bottle; 877/563-7946; shopmerwins.com); **Sünner Kölsch** (\$3 for a 16.9-oz. bottle, 888/942-9463; binnys.com). Pick up six-packs of **Four Peaks Sunbru Kölsch** while in Arizona (\$8 for six 12-oz. cans; 480/991-1795; fourpeaks.com) and **Saint Arnold's Fancy Lawnmower** in Louisiana and Texas (\$8 for six 12-oz. bottles; 800/801-6402; saintarnold.com). To imbibe at one of our favorite breweries while in Cologne, Germany, visit **Früh am Dom** (Am Hof 12-18, 50667; 49/221/261-3211; frueh.de), **Brauhaus Sion** (Unter Taschenmacher 5-7, 50667; 49/221/257-8540; brauhausion.de), **Peters Brauhaus** (Mühlengasse 1, 50667; 49/221/257-3950; peters-brauhaus.de), **Pfaffen Brauerei** (Heumarkt 62, 50667; 49/221/257-7765; max-paeffgen.de), **Brauerei zur Malzmühle** (Heumarkt 6, 50667; 49/221/210-117; muehlenkoelsch.de), and **Brauhaus Paffgen** (Friesenstraße 64, 50670; 49/221/135-461; paeffgen-koelsch.de). Order your own copy of **Veg-etable Literacy**, available on Amazon (\$26; 206/266-2992; amazon.com).

### Kansas

To make farmer's salad with beet vinaigrette (see page 72), order **Rick's Picks Phat Beets** (\$8 for a 15-oz. jar; 212/358-0428; rickspicksnyc.com) and **Beauvais pickled red cabbage** (\$7 for a 580-gram jar; 877/446-8763; igourmet.com). Use **French le Puy lentils** for the lentil and beet salad with lavender–mustard vinaigrette (see page 72); ask for French Lentils at Whole Foods Markets across the country (\$5 for a 1-lb. bag; wholefoodsmarket.com). To make the sweet potato

salad with tomatoes and ginger (see page 73), buy **The Ginger People Bakers' Cut Crystallized Ginger Chips**, available from Sur La Table (\$9 for a 7-oz. tin; 800/243-0852; surlatable.com). To make braised rabbit with mushrooms and celery root (see page 73), purchase a **whole natural rabbit** from D'Artagnan (\$38 for a 3-lb rabbit; 800/327-8246; dartagnan.com).

### Oklahoma

For cowboy caviar (see page 90), buy **canned golden hominy** (\$20 for six 15.5-oz. cans; 800/234-2553; store.allens.com). To prepare smoked tomato soup (see page 90), use a **Camerons stovetop smoker** and **mesquite wood chips** (\$55 for one smoker, including wood chips; 888/563-0227; cameronproducts.com) and **wild micro-flowers**, like Egyptian star flower and citrus coriander blooms or a flowering herb, like mint or basil, available from Chef's Garden (\$24 for a 50-count package; 800/289-4644; chefs-garden.com). Use **Kraft Traditional Caramels** to make the caramel–apple pie (see page 92), available on Amazon (\$9 for a 14-oz. bag; see above). To read our favorite heartland cookbooks, order a vintage copy of **The Prairie Farmer-WLS Cookbook**, **Prairie Home Cooking**, and **At Willa Cather's Tables** from Amazon (\$17–\$25; see above).

### Nebraska

Purchase Bolthouse Farms **100% carrot juice** from Whole Foods Markets across the country (\$4 for a 15.2-oz. bottle; see above) to make the glazed trout with carrot purée and spätzle recipe (see page 105). To make the dough for goudarooni (see page 106), use **Antimo Caputo Italian Superfine "00" Farina Flour**, available on Amazon (\$4 for a 2.2-lb. bag; see above). Finish the perfect prime rib sandwich (see page 107) with **Old Home: Texas Toast** from Walmart stores across the country (prices vary for a 24-oz. loaf; walmart.com). Slice into a thick, juicy **Omaha steak** (prices vary by cut; 800/960-8400; omahasteaks.com) with one of our favorite steak knives: **Global GSF-4023 steak knives** (\$220 for a set of 4; 800/650-9866; cutleryandmore.com), **Wüsthof Classic Ikon steak knives** (\$290 for a set of 4; 866/438-7417; swissknifeshop.com), **Shun Shima steak knives** (\$200 for a set of 4; 877/812-6235; williams-sonoma.com), **Chicago Cutlery 4-pc. Oversized Walnut Steak House Knife Set** (\$27 for a set of 4; 800/248-1987; knife-depot.com), **Laguiole steak knives** (\$59 for a set of 4; 888/922-4119; westelm.com) or **J.A. Henckels International Classic Forged Steak Set** (\$100 for a set of 4; 212-563-5990; zwillingonline.com).

**Correction:** In "Secrets of the Grill" on page 70 of the June/July issue, we inaccurately quoted chef Craig Koketsu as referring to a rib eye as a lean cut of meat. Our apologies to the chef; we regret the error.

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**YEAR** 1985

**PLACE** Managua, Nicaragua

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*A boy finds a sweet way to watch the news during the watermelon harvest in Nicaragua.*

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